



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

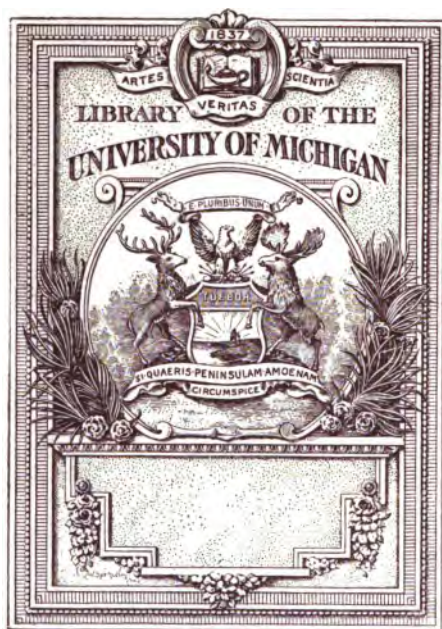
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



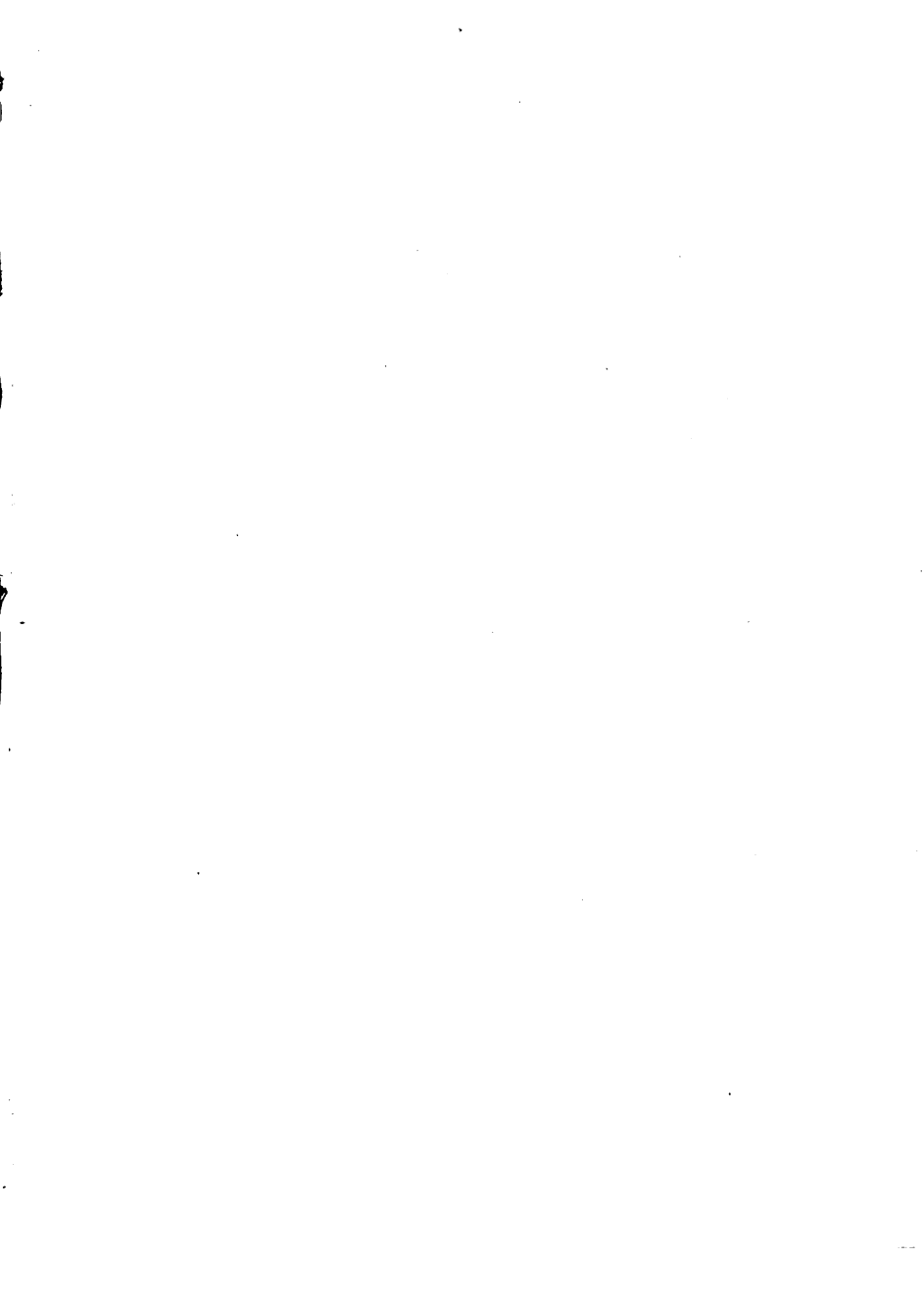
828

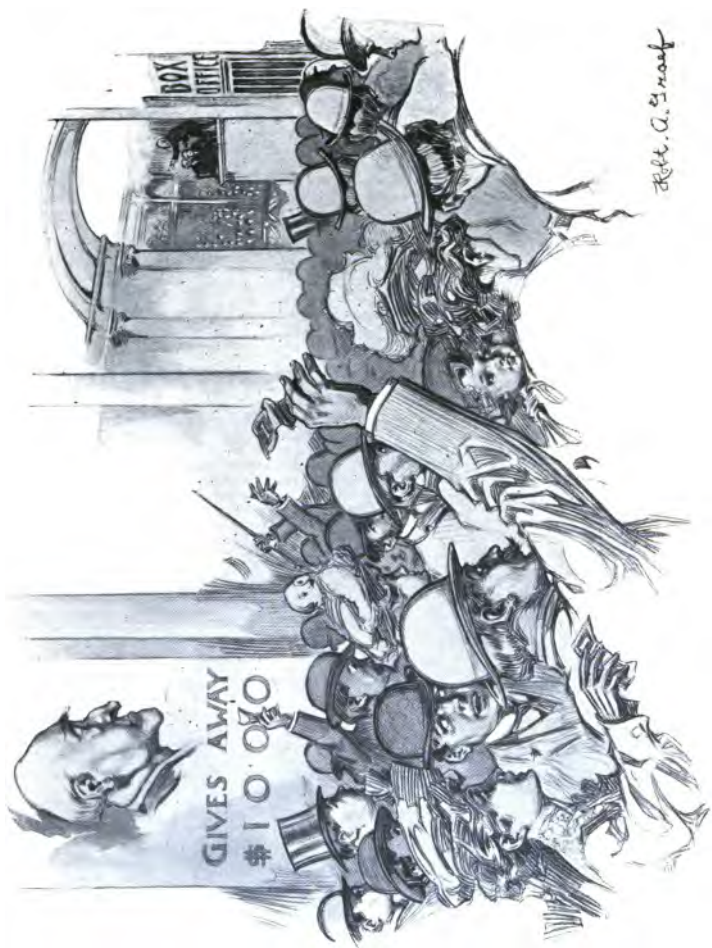
L8627i



I've Been Thinking







"The house was crowded at one dollar per head."

John Thibault

BY

CHARLES BATTELL LOOMIS

NEW YORK

JAMES POTT & COMPANY

1905

Am. 12

Am. 12

I've Been Thinking

BY

CHARLES BATTELL LOOMIS



NEW YORK

JAMES POTT & COMPANY

1905

Copyright, 1905, by
JAMES POTT & COMPANY

FIRST IMPRESSION, SEPTEMBER, 1905

© 28 MAR 08 E.S.

TO MY BOYHOOD FRIEND

H. C. D.

176147



“Cynthia, Cynthia, I’ve Been Thinking”



PREFACE

I WANTED a book that I could pick up if I had five minutes to wait before she came down stairs, or before the doctor called me into his office, or that I could slip into my pocket to read while on my way to pay that long postponed visit to my suburban friend.

There were lots of stories but they were too long. Just as I got to the exciting part she would come down, or the doctor would say "Step this way, please," or the conductor would say "Hopeless. All out."

You see I didn't want the book to have any settled line of talk in it at all. I wished it to treat of the destruction of moths, the barbarity of war, the training of children, the fascination of automobiling, the sins of millionaires, the virtues of beggars, the lure of the country and the lures of the city.

I didn't want it to take any topic too seriously, and I didn't want to feel that because I laughed at the first sketch I would have to laugh at the second. I wanted it hit or miss all the way through.

Not finding such a miscellaneous book in any of the book stores I set to work to write one myself, and now when I feel the need of advice I take this book down and get many useful hints about the care of children, millionaires, servants, and moths. It's somewhat like lifting one's self by one's boot straps (an unusually impossible thing these days since boots have gone out), but I don't have to take my own advice, and I would advise you not to take it either if it occasions the least inconvenience.

If you are a husband you will find many cheerful hits at your wife. If you are a wife you will find that I have polished off your husband. If you are a money grabber or a money grubber (variations of the same vile

Preface

ix

animal) you may enjoy the hits at spendthrifts, and if you are a generous liver you may find to your liking my shots at misers.

I have not scrupled to hit myself and these stabs have cut deep, but I fear they will do me no permanent good. You may not be benefited either, but if the book does fill in that gap I spoke of that comes before you hear the rustle of her adorable skirts on the stairs, or if it prevents your thinking of the doctor's call, or if it enables you to bear up under your suburban visit, I'll be more than satisfied.

CHARLES BATTELL LOOMIS



I've Been Thinking



THE other day I had been going on at a pretty rapid rate, denouncing the ill-gotten money of the American "robber barons," saying that I would rather die poor but honest than be as rich as — I can't think of his name, but he is respected by the unthinking everywhere.

Suddenly a man who is known from end to end of the world came up to me — yes, to me, and asked me, how I was getting along.

Why, I almost gasped for breath. He is worth millions, and I wondered how he could have heard of me, who owe the dollar and a quarter that I call my own.

Now, if ever anybody made his money sin-

I've Been Thinking

fully he did. He stands high up among the Standard Oil men and I yield to no one in contempt for his methods, although I will admit that his manners are perfect and he certainly seems to know people outside of his world.

He congratulated me on a story of mine that he had read. It was one satirizing plutocrats, but he had missed the satire and had taken it as a compliment.

Said he, "I wish to help people in all the arts. I wish to seek out artists and give them rolls of money. I want to find struggling musicians and help them to an education. And I particularly want to give you a house and lot and some shares of railroad stock that will yield you an income of ten thousand dollars a year."

Well, you may imagine I did not know what to do. However the man may have come by his money, he was certainly moved by kindly feelings in wishing to share with me.

I hesitated and hemmed and hawed and

I've Been Thinking 3

thought of my family and of the good uses to which I might put the money.

And then I remembered that my ancestors were Puritans, and that not one of them in all the nine generations ever told a lie or did anything wrong in any way whatsoever, and I took a long breath and said, "Thy money perish with thee. I'll have none of it."

And then I woke up.



WHAT would we have thought of that mother who thirty or even fifteen years ago allowed her children to play tag and spin tops on the railroad track of a trunk line? We would have called her lacking in common sense. But the world moves, and although mothers still object to their children playing tag and spinning tops on railroad tracks, steam cars are now allowed on our highways and byways, and whereas the railroad train runs on a sched-

ule, the modern steam car and its brothers the electric car and the gasoline motor run at full speed under no schedule, and they run where children most do congregate.

And so used do we become to dangers that we mothers — I speak as a man — sit at our bedroom windows and calmly continue our sewing as we watch Willy elude a machine running at twenty miles an hour, and Jenny calmly step aside to allow the passage of a road-devouring monster, painted red and “chugging” in a manner unknown to our fathers, who did not even know what “chugging” was.

Now, when air-ships are common and they begin to fall from the sky, as they most certainly will in the hands of inexperienced aeronauts, the careful mother will at first make her children play in the house or in some protected playground, but after awhile she will realize that this world is meant to be lived in, danger or no danger, and she will merely say: “Willy,

I've Been Thinking 5

if you hear a strange noise overhead look up and dodge or I can't let you play out of doors."

And in learning to dodge a falling airship and at the same time keep out of the path of a hurtling motor-car, the children of the future will get to be so nimble that the race as a whole will be improved. It will be a fast race, in fact.

Which shows that everything is for the best.



IN the fiftieth year of the life of Jabez Holtite, the multi-millionaire, the thought came to him that it might be good for his soul if he gave away in charity some of the money that he had reached out and picked up right and left since his "pickers and stealers" had been strong enough to clutch.

Jabez had never troubled churches by his presence and he did not know that there is an injunction that you let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.

6 I've Been Thinking

And yet in acquiring his wealth it must be said that he had unwittingly carried out the spirit of that precept, for many of the doings of his right hand were of so questionable a nature that he had kept his left hand in darkness for very shame. But (to speak fair) if the right hand had known of some of the deeds of the left hand it would have blushed. Oh, they were a good pair of hands, those hands of the multi-millionaire! Ever faithful to his material interests had they been, but now he was afraid that his chance of heaven would be meager if they did not together act as almoners—of course, with a proper “barker” before them to trumpet forth their good deeds to an admiring world.

So Jabez Holtite sent for a reporter and said to him: “What is the best way to let the world know that I am not merely an acquirer of wealth, but that all my money-getting has had but one object, the final giving away of all my goods to the poor?”

I've Been Thinking 7

The reporter said, "You might advertise on our financial page to this effect: 'Jabez Holtite, millionaire, wishes to divide his wealth among the really deserving. Address him at the Post-office, naming amount desired and giving your oath to requite him by spreading abroad the good report of his generosity.'"

Jabez looked troubled. "I am afraid that would be too widespread in its effect," said he. "I expect to live many years, and did not intend to give you the impression that I wished to divest myself of my means as a man divests himself of his shirt — at once. I thought I would be willing to give something like a thousand dollars to some well-known institution, and I am willing — perfectly willing — to talk about it to the extent of a column in your paper."

The reporter grew an inch. "Mr. Holtite," said he, "if you are actually going to give a thousand dollars to any sort of charitable institution, or even to a college, and will promise to

let no other newspaper hear of it before we have a chance to give it publicity, we will be glad to devote our whole first page to it because it will be in the nature of absolutely startling news. You have never given a cent to any one in your life, as I understand it?"

"Never, unless I was sure that I would get two cents in return," said Jabez, with a proud smile.

"Then I suggest that you give your money to some institution that is already heavily endowed and that will thus be worthy of your unexampled generosity." And the reporter named such an institution.

Then he took down in great detail all the facts in the life of Jabez as seen by the millionaire himself, getting thereby a picture of the man that no one else in the wide world would have painted, and worth at least six columns to the reporter, who had it all for the mere taking it down in shorthand.

I've Been Thinking 9

The reporter was of a grateful disposition and, knowing that this interview would spell success for him, he wished to make a return to Jabez, and being not only grateful but also waggish, the form of his return was as follows:—

“Mr. Holtite,” said he, “charity is charity, and a good deed much blown about penetrates to remote places and is put to the credit of the doer of the deed; but if the good deed can be made to bear immediate fruit, if your bread comes back on the return wave, so to speak, you will probably stand for a long time on the beach chucking loaves into the sea.”

“Go on,” said Jabez; “I am listening.”

“My idea is,” said the reporter, “and I hope you will take my frankness in the proper spirit, that the public would as soon believe that Roosevelt was a figure-head, or that William of Germany was a puppet, as that you, Jabez Holtite, would actually give away money, and I think there are thousands in this great city

10 I've Been Thinking

who would gladly give a dollar apiece to see you in the act."

"Ah, they know I am a wonder as an acquirer," said Jabez, mentally hugging himself.

"Sure," said the reporter. "Now why not hire Madison Square Garden, erect a platform in the middle of the arena and give away a thousand dollars every hour on the stroke of the clock? You might also give them a fifteen-minute talk on how to become a millionaire on a capital of two cents and an atrophied conscience. You catch my point?"

"Why, certainly," said Jabez. "Young man, you have a brilliant future."

The whole world knows the result. Madison Square Garden was crowded every hour at a dollar a head.

And every hour, at the stroke of the clock, Jabez Holtite gave to well-known and influential institutions a thousand dollars and a fifteen-minute talk worth a thousand more to persons

I've Been Thinking 11

with the proper consciences, and he felt that it was well worth giving when the gate receipts were so large.

He came to think that it would have been better for him if he had begun to give sooner in life, and his mouth grew less hard solely from the human feelings that surged up in his heart every time he handed out a check for a thousand dollars and realized that the Garden was packed at a dollar per.

At the end of the week he had given away \$50,000 and had taken in \$500,000, and then, to show that his regeneration was genuine, he hired the Garden for another week and doubled the price of admission, doubling also his gift.

And to show that he was no ingrate he gave the reporter a season pass and allowed him to interview him every day. And at times he could hear his own heart beat, and then he knew that he had become generous. And his reputation as a cheerful giver was almost as

I've Been Thinking

great at the end of the second week as his former reputation for meanness.

It all depends upon the way it's done.



IF you do not care to wreck your bark on the breakers of divorce, see to it that Love stands at the tiller when you go aboard.

"Love suffereth long and is kind." A very pleasant fellow to have at the helm, you must admit.

When you go down to the pier at which the little boat is moored, you and she, be sure to it that Love, the dear little fellow, is standing somewhere near, and then do you call him up and say, "I entrust my bark to your keeping. We want to sail as long as the boat lasts and we want you to guide us among pleasant places. If storms come up we do not wish to evade them, only see to it that we weather all gales;

I've Been Thinking 13

and whatever you do, see to it that we do not strike on the rock of divorce."

And Love will shake his curly head and say with a merry laugh:

"I have acted as helmsman to many a couple, but never yet have I struck on the rock of divorce. Now, over there is a well dressed sailor named Gold. His boat is bigger than this and is furnished better, but if I do say it, he cannot mind helm as well as I, for many and many a couple has he spilled out on either side of the rock of divorce. Are you ready, sir? Shall I cast off?

"Cast off, my hearty," say you. "We are in for a long and perhaps an adventurous voyage, but with you and with her on board I'll be bound it will be a happy one."

All of which is a pretty little allegory and I made it up out of my own little head.

And it's true, every word of it.

I ENCLOSE an interesting clipping that will appeal especially to you. Let me know what you think of it."

And then she doesn't enclose it and the recipient of her letter vainly hunts for it.

The non-enclosing habit follows the postal route all over the world.

It can be carried to maddening extremes, as when the young man who is stranded in the West receives a loving letter from his mother, in which, after telling him all the little inconsequences of his native village, she says, "I did not know what to get you for your birthday and so enclose a five-dollar bill."

Imagine the feelings of the poor tenderfoot, down to his last cent, when he finds that she has forgotten the enclosure. If only she had forgotten the village gossip and remembered the thing that would have made that particular letter memorable.

I've Been Thinking 15

In the same class as the non-enclosers are those who say, "Of course, George will have written you about the mysterious happenings in the house of Cynthia Alendale. How do you account for them?"

It is more than likely that if George has written at all he will have said, "I suppose that Emma has told you all about the blood-curdling affair at Cynthia Alendale's so I will not waste your time by telling you about it. But wasn't it awful? What are we coming to?"

If only George and Emma had assumed that the other had not told a single thing about the interesting affair! Here and there are people who hate to receive letters, but most of us are human (Heaven be praised!) and so in writing put in all the human touches you can think of, and don't assume that "the other fellow" has written all the interesting news because you may depend upon it he hasn't.

And remember to put in the enclosure

16 I've Been Thinking

even if you forget to post the letter containing it.



I KNOW it is none of my business, but are you going to let Jane grow up with that unpleasant voice?

Haven't you read the praise of Southern women's voices to some advantage?

I don't suppose that Jane's speaking voice could ever be made really melodious, although, strange to say, her singing voice is not at all unpleasant.

But you could eliminate that strident quality.

The other day I was sitting in the seaward end of a ferryboat when Jane came in from the slip. The boat was full and every one was talking, but Jane's voice rose above all the others and almost every one looked up.

I'll venture to say that most of them were reminded of a beautiful macaw.

I've Been Thinking 17

For there is no denying that Jane is a handsome girl.

And she's a bright girl and she says bright things, but they are all screeched at you.

If Jane marries let her pick out a phlegmatic man, unless she uses a file on that voice. It would be cruelty to animals to let her marry a sensitive soul, say a painter or a writer, because to be shut up in the same cage day after day with the most beautiful macaw imaginable would be to have one's nerves de-insulated.

She may be disobedient and outgrow it; she may be disrespectful and outgrow it.

But if your daughter has an unpleasant voice she won't outgrow it unless you keep at her all the time.



HAVE you ever heard about that business man who in advertising his particular brand of breakfast fodder increased the circula-

18 I've Been Thinking

tion of the paper in which he advertised a hundred-fold?

Well, it was this way. His name was Wise, and he had unlimited money to spend. He had formerly owned a sawmill and he naturally had a large quantity of sawdust on hand. It struck him that if he could buy a low-priced molasses, and could make an amalgam of molasses and sawdust and advertise it as the only nutritious food, good alike for brain, brawn, cuticle, and hair, he could make a fortune in a month or two.

So he called in an advertising man, and put him on a princely salary at once, and said:

"Go ahead. Advertise Sord Ust in any way you like, as long as you get the people's attention."

Now, the advertising man was a genius and he said to himself: "If I advertise this thing a little in every paper people will only think a little of it, but if I bend all my energies on one

I've Been Thinking 19

paper, and that a very important one, and advertise it there uniquely for a month or so, the very oddity of the thing will attract attention."

So he went to the office of the Daily Howler and said:

"I want to buy every page in your paper for advertising purposes."

And the business manager told him it couldn't be done.

So the advertising man showed him what a large check he could write, and then the business manager said it was possible, and the next day Mr. Man had every page in the Daily Howler. There was not a murder, not a bit of editorial speculation, not a thing of any sort in the paper, except the name and the date and the subscription price.

And of course there was no advertisement. And that piqued curiosity.

Well, this thing happened next day and the

next, and then on the editorial page was printed in very small letters,

TRY SORD UST

Now you may well believe that subscribers began to rush in, for here was a paper that could be introduced into the most bigoted home in the land. There were no tiresome politics in it; no dreadful murders; nothing but Sord Ust.

Every one said it was the cleanest paper that had ever been issued, and more and more people subscribed to it. It got to be quite a fad. To be sure, the subscribers did not know what was going on in the world except by hearsay, but they had that much more time for other things, and they were, consequently, far happier, and, reading about no murders or steamship trusts or Presidential possibilities, they finally came to the conclusion that the millennium was at hand.

But, of course, the thing that made the most

I've Been Thinking 21

impression on them was this Sord Ust. They began to inquire for it in the stores and they found that no one kept it. No one had ever heard of it. It was impossible to buy a box of it anywhere because the clever advertising man had given orders to his employer to refuse to sell it for at least six months.

People did not even know whether it was a new kind of soap, or a breakfast food, or the latest thing in stove polish.

What was the result? Why, people were mad to get it. They would have it. The very idea that in a free country they were not allowed to buy anything they wanted! Was this Maine with a prohibitive law on something the people really wanted?

And all this time the editor of the Daily Howler kept on increasing his edition, and all the time Mr. Wise went on buying sawdust and cheap molasses until he had a whole county in Northern New York heaped high with it and

I've Been Thinking

five large mills hard at work compressing it into cakes.

And at last, seemingly on account of the pressure of public opinion, but really because the advertising man said it was high time, Mr. Wise put an advertisement on the first page of the Daily Howler to the effect that Sord Ust was a breakfast food, and that all you need do to it was to pour a little hot milk on it; and if your grocer wouldn't get it for you change your grocer at once!

Was it a success?

Well, I guess.

Why, they had one long freight train stretching from the mills to New York, moving all the time on a special track, and as fast as a car was unloaded at the Manhattan end a car was filled at the other end.

Motive power? Electricity, of course.

And the man became a millionaire ten times over before the year was up and before the

I've Been Thinking 23

Sord Ust had kicked up any racket in the insides of the populace.

And now the advertising man began to advertise in all the papers, and the Daily Howler came before its millions of subscribers with murders and editorials once more, and they, after their long fast, were only too glad to learn that the world was not as good as they had suspected, and the Daily Howler was a bigger success than ever.

But the editor had got the tip, and he didn't use Sord Ust on his home menu.

And he's alive yet.



ARE you socially your husband's inferior or his superior?

If you are his inferior he is probably too much of a gentleman to have told you so, but if you are his superior I am very much afraid that you have let him know it.

But if you are and if you have, don't let it rest at that. Try by all the means in your power to lift him up to your social level. If your table manners are better than his; if you cannot eat a dinner without the use of from two to three forks, while he is prone to get along without any, try to educate him. If he won't use three compromise on one. That will be a beginning.

It will be a great pity if you let him drag you down to his level. It is always a pity when a man or a woman coasts from birth instead of climbing from birth. Let your motto be, "Ever upward." Don't you want to be superior socially to anyone on earth? How can you become so if you do not climb and drag your husband along too?

Lift him up and teach your children to be a little better than either of you. This will not be hard, as they already feel they are — that is, if they are good Americans. If they are

I've Been Thinking 25

Chinese they are becomingly humble and think that the sun rises and sets in you and your husband. But it is safe to say that your children are not Chinese. They want to move on a higher social plane than you moved, and on a much higher plane than their father moves.

And when they have reached what they have striven for, just use them to pull you and your husband up and the end of your family will be some Blue Book.

It's a great ambition.



I THINK it was Zangwill who said that, like a poet, a gentleman was born, not made. The same aphorism can be applied to the opposite sex. A true lady is born, not made.

Being born a lady she can be improved by education and by refining influences, but she will not suddenly begin to be a lady, she will always have been one; while if she was not born

a lady no amount of education or refinement or stimulating environment will make her a true lady.

She may educate herself to become a very passable imitation of a lady by cultivating her sense of her obligations to her brothers and sisters in this world.

She may act the part so often and so well that after a time she will convince people that she is a lady; but if she only takes the trouble to be born one, if she will only choose for her ancestors kindly, unselfish people, she will be apt to start her life with the chief requisites, and then, no matter what her education may or may not be, her heart will every day incline her to ladylike actions and people will say when she dies, "She was a true woman if ever there was one."

And to be a true woman is to be the best possible kind of lady.

I HEARD a beautiful story the other day about an afflicted father, a loving daughter, and a piano.

It seems that the father had long wished his daughter to become a proficient performer on the piano, and the daughter, distrusting her own capabilities, had made up her mind that she could never play well enough to make her devotion of hours and hours of practise worth while.

Suddenly, and almost without warning, her father was stricken with blindness, and then the daughter, taking a leaf out of Dickens, determined to play Dot to his Caleb, and with that in view she bought a piano player on the instalment plan.

Her father had been away for some weeks when the automatic player came to the house, and upon his return she said to him: "Father, dear, would you like to hear some music?"

28 I've Been Thinking

And her father said, "I would indeed, daughter, if you can play some for me. I want to see if you have improved during my absence."

So the old gentleman sat himself down on the sofa and turned his ear toward the piano, and the daughter put a Hungarian Rhapsody by Liszt in its place and started the mechanism.

When she came to an end her father called her to him and kissed her upon her forehead and patted her cheek and said: "What a dear little thing it is and how much it loves to please its papa. Paderewski might interpret it differently but he could not play it any faster."

And while the daughter's pride and her conscience were having it out between them, her father said: "Daughter, I too have a surprise."

He turned toward her and continued. "While in New York I visited an oculist and I can now see as well as I ever could. How much do you have to pay a month for the thing?"

I've Been Thinking 29

HE was a coward. No man save himself knew it for he had been fortunate enough to keep the knowledge of it from others. But he knew that he was a coward.

He admired bravery in other men. He read tales of heroes with keen pleasure and he wished that the gods had given him the quality of courage. But he was nevertheless a coward.

When the Spanish war broke out he saw his friends go to the front and he envied them. They will do brave deeds and be admired of men, thought he, but I who am a coward must stay at home with the women.

And he loved a girl and was loved in return by her. And she did not know that he was a coward. But well he knew that he was.

And as the weeks went by and much fighting had been done and yet he had not offered up his manhood for the cause his sweetheart grew impatient and asked him what kept him at

30 I've Been Thinking

home. And he could not answer her. For he would not admit that he was a coward save to himself.

Then as she importuned him to go he weighed his chances. If I go, said he, I may not see actual service, but she cannot twit me with cowardice. I will risk it for my soul's peace.

And he enlisted. And for many months fortune favored him and he saw no active service. But yet his knees shook daily when he thought of the possibilities of the future.

And at last he was ordered into battle, and because his moral cowardice outweighed his physical fear and he feared ridicule more than he feared danger he exposed himself to the fire of the enemy. And he was unharmed, but his fellows said, he is a brave man.

And his first battle was his last also, for the war ended on that day and he went home. And the papers and his comrades spoke of his bravery, and his sweetheart accepted him

I've Been Thinking 31

at his reputed valuation and they were married.

But his life was embittered, for he hated hypocrisy and in his heart of hearts he knew that he was still a coward.



HAVE you a meek husband?
Don't bullyrag him.

Remember that even if you did omit the "honor and obey" clause in the marriage service you were made partners, and as he probably suggested the partnership in the first place he has some rights.

If you must bullyrag him be sure that you do it in the quiet (or tumult) of your own home. This baiting of a husband in public, while it may afford food for laughter on the part of the groundlings, can but make the judicious grieve.

A large woman leading around a small puppy is always a ridiculous sight.

32 I've Been Thinking

If you make a puppy of your husband and accompany him out of evenings, remember that some of the after-laughter will be expended upon you.

If he is a puppy feed him well, treat him kindly — and perhaps he will become a jolly dog.

But do not live a comic supplement life with him, because the comic paper habit is so general in this country and the types are so firmly grounded in the minds of even the young that you will be recognized at sight, and depend upon it, all the sympathy will go out to the (under) dog.

Perhaps you are intellectual and your husband is not. Don't twit him with your college education.

When you come right down to it, if he never went to college, you have forgotten most of what you learned there, and so you are not in a position to snub him as unmercifully as you do.

I've Been Thinking 33

No doubt your mind was disciplined by the very things you have forgotten, but remember that, "while it is excellent to have a giant's strength it is tyrannous to use it like a giant." Lead your husband up. Don't beat him down.



HAVE you an allowance?

If your husband is a salaried man he ought to give you an allowance, because it is to be supposed that you do your share of the work that goes to the making of home and you are therefore a partner in the concern.

If your husband is an artist or a musician or a writer and is dependent on his skill in disposing of his work, that is to say, if he is without a regular salary, you can hardly expect him to give you an allowance; but you should make no bones of asking him for what you need, because, again, you are partners.

Your husband is not a little tin god on wheels.

34 I've Been Thinking

His money is your money, and you may depend upon it that if you were earning and he was housekeeping he would cheerfully and promptly ask you for money as he needed it.

I have known wives who asked as a favor what was theirs by right.

Of course if you are merely the fine lady with no responsibilities; if you are a member of this and of that club and spend your time in writing papers on the bringing up of other people's children while your own are brought up with a round turn (eventually), you have no right to ask your husband for money. You are no longer a partner in the concern. He is the whole thing and he may do as he pleases with his hard earned money.

Or if you are extravagant and for your sins your husband has kept a tight hand on the purse, I have nothing to say. It is not pleasant to see money laboriously earned gaily dispersed, as if the fact of spending it generated more.

I've Been Thinking 35

But if you know that you are healthily economical, and if your husband is doing well, why, ask him this evening when he comes home. Wait until he has dined (and see that the dinner is a good one). Then when he is smoking his cigar just tell him how you were admitted into the partnership when you were married to him, and that hereafter he will please see to it that you have a decent allowance.

Of course you must dress up your request in what diplomatic robes are at your command. Don't use a "stand and deliver" attitude or he may call in the constabulary.

But if he allows the allowance don't thank me, rather laugh at yourself for not having had spirit enough to ask it before.

It's yours by right.



MRS. WORTHING, Mrs. Gregory Worthing, said to me the other day:

"I cannot understand why it is that so many mothers think their ducks are swans. Now there's Mrs. Brown, always boasting about the rapid progress that her Dorothy has made in music, and my Ethel who did not begin until a term later plays a great deal better.

"Different mothers boast of different things," she went on, "but almost all but myself boast about something in their children, and for my part I think the children in this place are very ordinary. Gregory carries himself very much better than most children, because I insisted upon his going in to New York to take dancing lessons when he was not eight, but the average boy of to-day is awfully slouchy. And yet I heard Mrs. Harrison talking about her son Arthur being as straight as an Indian and that

I've Been Thinking 37

he got it from his father. Fancy, that undersized little John Harrison!

"And Mrs. Winslow says that Barbara sews remarkably well for a girl of ten, and she is always showing me the last thing she has done. Why, Ethel sewed well naturally. I never taught her a stitch, but she does all my towel hemming now. But I never would think of boasting of it.

"And the other day I happened to say that Gregory had quite a correct ear, and that now that his voice had changed he sang better than any of the boys in the choir, and that was enough for Mrs. Demock. She began, and she talked and talked about the beauty of Clement's voice, and said that he took after her. Absolute conceit, and yet she never imagined for a moment that I noticed it. Now, with Gregory, his singing comes perfectly natural, because I have always sung, and in fact when I was a girl I used to be always

38 I've Been Thinking

asked to sing in company, but when I married I gave it up."

When I remembered that to my unprejudiced eyes Gregory was a good-natured hobbledehoy and Ethel a kind-hearted but hopelessly commonplace child, I couldn't help wondering with Mrs. Worthing why it is that so many mothers think their ducks are swans.



IF there is a boy that I admire in the suburb in which I live, which suburb is in Connecticut, by the way, it is Tom Bingham. He is tall and sturdy and good tempered and a favorite with boys and girls; he has a well developed sense of humor and I never meet him but I find that we two have a good deal in common, in spite of our fifty years' disparity.

The other evening I went into town in the same car with his mother and father and I had

I've Been Thinking 39

quite a chat with Mrs. Bingham, who is very different from Mrs. Worthing.

Our subject was children, and I confessed to her that I was clean discouraged about my boy Harry; that it did seem as if all my talking and advice and splendid example since he was born had been thrown away on him, and that he seemed more thoughtless and hopeless every day.

"Why, I'm perfectly astonished to hear you say so," she said. "I was telling Mr. Bingham only last night that if there was a manly, well brought up boy in the place it was your Harry, and he agreed with me. Dear me! if you had such a chap as Tom to bring up you might well despair. I sometimes wonder whether we'll ever get any credit for having tried to bring him up in the way he should go."

"Why, Mrs. Bingham, surely you are joking," said I. "Your son Tom is the one boy in town that I think is a credit to his parents.

I've Been Thinking

He always lifts his cap when he meets me; the other day I saw him helping the washerwoman over a bad place on the icy pavement, and I know that he is a great favorite with the other boys — and girls, too. I don't believe you know your boy Tom at all."

And then it came over me like a thunder clap, "Do I know my boy Harry? Does he show off his best points at home?"

And it struck me that perhaps Mrs. Bingham and I were better off in our sons than either of us imagined.



I ONCE knew a millionaire who always carried his money around with him in bills. There were some dollar bills, more ten-dollar bills, and many hundred and thousand-dollar bills. He always carried them in a suit case with an ordinary lock and key, and he told me

I've Been Thinking 41

that he was happy just because he had the actual money.

His brother hardly ever handled money at all. He was a millionaire, too, but he did all his business with checks and seldom had more than twenty dollars on his person, and he was miserable and dyspeptic.

I understood the feeling of the moneyed millionaire better than that of the checked one. The first man was not a miser; he was simply a grown-up child, with a child's delight in actually seeing the money that he had earned by the sweat of his brow, most of it at a dollar a day. Don't stop to figure out how many days he had worked, or I won't wait.

Now, of course, there are persons of imagination who can go through life using checks and feeling rich, but it takes a good deal of imagination to do so, and for me the pretty green ten-dollar bill means ten times as much as the check for ten dollars.

I've Been Thinking

Of course, checks have their uses, and I use them myself. When a bill for some prosaic thing, like repairs to the coal chute, comes in I send out a check in payment, but if I am buying a book that I have long coveted, you may be sure that I hand out real money for it. The book represents something tangible, and I will not insult the book dealer by sending him a cold, unfeeling check.

If I wanted to bring happiness to a widow whose husband had died leaving her destitute, do you think that I would send her a check for a thousand dollars? If you do, you don't know me.

If I were going to do the thing at all I would go to her house with one thousand crisp dollar bills, and I would receive her thanks for each one. But it is a queer thing about gratitude. Her thanks for the first bill would be heartfelt, but by the time I had reached the first hundred she would have grown tired of thank-

I've Been Thinking 43

ing me, and I verily believe that before I had handed in the last bill she would have asked me if I couldn't be a little more expeditious. Thus usage dulls the senses.

On the other hand, do you suppose that if I were sued for a thousand dollars I would pay the complainant in good green money? No, a thousand times no. I would purposely buy the smallest blank check that I could find, and in my most minute chirography, and with an autograph that was barely good, I would sign it, and thus I would feel that I was getting off cheap.

In some things most of us are intensely mean, and among the expenditures that offend men's souls are those paid into a railroad company's grasping maw. I hold myself no better than the rest, and, if possible, I always travel in company with another, and before we start out I give him money to cover the expenses, and then he buys the tickets and I feel that I have not spent so much.

I've Been Thinking

But in buying stationery, and books, and pictures, I never think of intrusting the business to another. Let me pick out my own paper, find my own book, be my own judge of the picture, and, when they are ready to deliver, let me pay the bill myself in coin of the realm.

Your plumber should always receive a check, but the man who entertains you should get good gold, even if it is only fifty cents' worth.

One objection I have to royalties is that they always come in the form of a check — when they come at all. One time, though, my publisher varied it; instead of sending a check he sent a bill. You see I had given at least ten copies of the book at Christmas time, and, of course, the balance was in his favor. Do you know, I really enjoyed the thing for a change.

By the way, that receiving of royalties, even

I've Been Thinking 45

if they are paid in check form, is a very good game. You sell your stories for so much, and then, when they are all printed, you are induced to make a book of them. Well, you have already been paid for them, so that you stand to gain, whatever happens. It may be only ten dollars that will come to you, but it may be ten thousand, and the joy of looking forward to royalty day is one that cannot be expressed in words. You do not hear much about the sale of your book; your friends say nothing about it, but perhaps they are keeping its phenomenal success a secret from you. You live in the country, and you never see the *Bookman*, so you do not know what the six best sellers are, but you have your suspicions. At last the fateful day arrives, the familiar envelope of your publisher comes to you by mail, and as you open it a check flutters out. You remember the stories of du Maurier and "Trilby," and how his publishers sent him

46 I've Been Thinking

several thousands over and above the contract agreement.

To be sure, it is only a check, and not money, but, after all, any bank will convert a check into money if you are known, and your book has doubtless made you known through the wide world.

You pick up the check and close your eyes, until you are holding it right in front of them. "The Second National Bank of New York. Pay to the order of yourself \$47.50. Harp, Scrib. & Co."

It isn't quite what you thought it would be. The book is not one of the six — yet. Still, after the first disappointment is over, you reflect that it is all clear gain, and you go to the bank and have it converted into new dollar bills, and then you go down to the bookstore and you buy thirty odd books that you have wanted for years.

No, you don't. You know very well you

I've Been Thinking 47

don't, for the same mail that brought the check brought its antithesis in the form of a bill from the gentleman who raised the price of beef on you, and the other gentleman who charged you eight dollars a ton for coal, and like a good little man you sit down and you write out two checks which take up forty-two of the dollars.

But take my advice, and get the better of fortune by taking the five-fifty that is left — and your wife — and going into town for a jamboree. Remember that a jamboree, small though it be, remains in the memory long after the memory of a paid bill has left you.

Pay the bills, but save enough out of the cost of your clothes for a little jamboree. Clothes warm the body, but jamborees warm the cockles of the heart, and a man who neglects the cockles of the heart to put Jaeger underwear on his lusty limbs has failed in his duty toward himself — and his better half.

“**C**HILDREN aren't as respectful as they were when I was a child.”

How can you say that and keep a straight face?

Don't you remember hearing your Uncle John say that very thing when you were about eight? He had come down from Maine to visit you, and while you liked him, you felt a little free with him and said something that brought forth his remark.

And if the truth might be got at, Uncle John had a similar experience when he was a boy. His uncle went up to Maine from Boston to visit and your Uncle John made some flippant remark that caused him to say that the disrespect of modern children (remember that it is always modern times to the man who is speaking even when you get back to the days of Rehoboam) — he said that the disrespect of modern children was something

I've Been Thinking 49

awful. Why, when he was a boy, children were brought up to be silent — utterly forgetting that his father flogged him for disrespect, 'way back before Warren fell at Bunker Hill, and while he was flogging him he deplored the evil days on which they had fallen. It had been so different when he was a boy. Children *then* were always respectful.

In fact this remark translated into different languages goes back to the time of Adam and he, for manifest reasons, could not make it.

But he is the only one who couldn't and didn't.



THE editor was getting up his Christmas issue, or, to be more exact, he was thinking of getting it up, and as he lolled lazily in his hammock and watched the shadows of the July clouds chasing each other over the distant hills he wondered whether he could not

strike a new note in Christmas issues — something that would appeal to every man, woman, and child in the land and cause them to tumble over each other in their eagerness to buy his magazine.

The shadows lengthened in the grass, the hum of the insects lost the help of the bees, who had ceased their work and gone to rest, and from the house within came the tinkle of a silvery bell that told him supper was served.

But he did not move, and at last his wife came to the door and, fanning her face with her apron, said: "John, everything is getting hot from standing. Do come in."

He bounded from his hammock.

"I have it, Mary, dear! I have it! I will have a Christmas issue that will leave all others in the rear. It will be the first of its kind, and I fully expect our sales to be increased a hundred-fold."

And then he told her of his scheme.

I've Been Thinking 51

"We will bring out the magazine on Christmas Eve, and from beginning to end there will not be a single mention of Christmas except on the cover."

"Well, but people will be expecting Christmas stuff."

"What! Expecting? Yes; they will be expecting it. You're right; and that's where we'll win. They won't get it. They will have had Christmas issues from early in November, and when they realize that they can spend the 25th of December reading a magazine that has absolutely no hint of an overworked holiday in it they will buy it and send it to their friends all over the world. Fold me to your bosom, little wife, for I have at last hit on a money-maker!"

His little wife folded him to her bosom, but it was such warm weather that he asked her to unfold him, and she unfolded him right away, because the way they preserved har-

52 I've Been Thinking

mony in the family was by minding each other at once, always.

Next day he went to the hot city and told his associates of his plan and they were aghast.

"W-h-a-t!" said they. "Nothing about little tots and their stockings? Not a word as to the origin of the Christmas legend? Nothing about the genial, jovial old saint? No Dickens story rehashed? No peace and good-will by the yard? Not a yule log nor a reference to mistletoe and the old maid aunt? Why, Puffer, you're daffy!"

But if Puffer was daffy he was also editor, and what he said went.

Oh, how happy the typesetters were when they learned that they would have to spell Christmas but once!

And if they were happy, think how more than happy the poets were who were told that no stuff would be accepted that hinted at the

I've Been Thinking 53

glad season, and that stockings were barred, whatever their pattern.

And the sketch and story writers. They came to Mr. Puffer with tears in their eyes and said to him: "You have saved our lives. Now we can write with enthusiasm. We had begun to hate Santa Claus and we hated to hate him, for he is such a nice old fellow; but we have had to ring so many changes on him that the sight of a snowy beard and ruddy cheeks makes us pessimistic."

And the artists. Really it was hard to stop the artists from drawing chimneys and rein-deers. The announcement that a Christmas number was on the stocks had always meant so many prancing deer and so many barefooted, nightgowned tots, and more than one artist turned in pictures of midsummer sheep warming their fleeces at yule logs instead of gambolling on sunny hillsides.

And the public. Well, it was even as Mr.

54 I've Been Thinking

Puffer had prophesied. At first they would not believe that there was such a magazine, and so they bought it to make sure. And it was full of stories about every day in the year but Christmas, and the cover had clover and clematis on it, and little naked boys in swimming under a summer sky. Oh, it was a great success, and for seven days the printing of it went on, and when New Year's Day came Mr. Puffer got a six months' leave of absence and went with his wife to travel in foreign lands, and when they returned they found out that every editor in America had taken a leaf out of Mr. Puffer's book and was going to bring out a Christmas-less Christmas number.

So Mr. Puffer laid low and said nothing to his brother editors, but, being now a very rich man, he invited a large number of writers and artists up to his summer place, and told them to write when they pleased and draw

I've Been Thinking 55

when they pleased, but to try to bend their energies to the making up of the only Christmas magazine in America.

And taking it that way in the middle of summer in a delightful place, they found they could think of Christmas without distaste, and they set to and planned the best Christmas number that had ever been thought of.

And now the public prints contained no mention of Christmas, and people began to sort of yearn for the pretty stories and the wintry yule-loggy pictures, and by the time Christmas Day came they were positively hungry for them.

And that is why Mr. Puffer's Christmas issue, full of Christmas stories and pictures, beat all records. Its circulation was only five or six short of sixteen millions.

And Mr. Puffer made so much money that he and his wife have been traveling ever since, and they always spend Christmas in the city

56 I've Been Thinking

where St. Nicholas was born, and they hang up their stockings and go through the motions and emotions, because there's a good deal in that Christmas spirit, if you don't get too much of it.



THERE are mornings that invite women who live in or near the country to go out and take a walk.

Those are the very mornings when stockings need to be darned or shelves need to be dusted or perhaps floors need to be swept.

Now there is no question but that a plain duty lies before these women thus early in the morning.

Will the woman go out and breathe the morning air and fill her eyes with nature's paintings or will she resolutely sit down to her darning or stand up to her dusting and sweeping?

Woman, learn to do your whole duty in this

I've Been Thinking 57

matter. Do not be swayed by foolish promptings; do not say, "It will not make any difference if I do it just this once. I can do the other thing later."

It will make a great deal of difference. It will make a difference to your children and to your husband. It may be their stockings that you are darning or his desk that you are dusting. It makes a great deal of difference whether you do your duty or not every morning.

When you rise from the breakfast table and see the basket of undarned stockings, or notice that you can write your name in the dust that has accumulated since the furnace was last shaken,—when you see these things and then look out of the window, and the birds and the air and the scene invite you to take a walk along pleasant paths, do your duty by your husband and your children and yourself. Take the walk.

CHILD — Papa, what is a New Yorker?
Papa — My child, a New Yorker is one who lives in New York — who has his residence there. A New Yorker may be a Chinaman from Pell Street, or a Polish Jew from Rivington Street, or a Syrian from Washington Street, or an Italian, from the Italian quarter, or a Greek or Jap or Swede or any nationality at all, provided he lives in New York City.

Child — Well, suppose a Russian lives in Brooklyn.

Papa — He is a New Yorker.

Child — Well, if a Portuguese lived in the Bronx?

Papa — He would be a New Yorker. Of course, my child, in a large sense, all inhabitants of the State of New York are New Yorkers, but, generally speaking, by the term New Yorker is meant one who lives in the city of New

I've Been Thinking 59

York, and that is why a Chinaman out on Staten Island is a New Yorker.

Child — Papa, does a man have to be a foreigner in order to live in New York?

Papa — What a question, my child. Of course not. There are many living in New York whose native language is English.

Child — Oh, they were born there?

Papa — Not necessarily. Some were born in Great Britain and Ireland and some in the British possessions, but they all speak English and they live in New York and are New Yorkers.

Child — Then if I understand you aright, my dear father, a man who lives in New York and who speaks English must have been born either in Great Britain, Ireland, or somewhere in the British possessions.

Papa — Not at all. There are native Americans who speak English and who live in New York.

60 I've Been Thinking

Child — And where are they from?

Papa — Some were born in New England, some on the Pacific coast, some in the Middle West, and some in the South.

Child — Then they are the real New Yorkers.

Papa — Not necessarily. Any man who lives in New York for any length of time becomes a New Yorker, no matter where he may have been born. When he travels he registers from New York.

Child — Is it in the air?

Papa — It is in the air. The Westerner despises New York until he has made a fortune, and then he comes to New York to spend it, and after that he is a New Yorker. The Southerner who has come to New York to live may say that he was born in the South, and if he doesn't his tongue will do it for him, but he glories in being a citizen of New York. The New Englander feels that he has honored New York by coming to it and that without

I've Been Thinking 61

him New York would not amount to much, but he, too, signs his name in the register as from New York.

Child — How about the Jerseyman, papa?

Papa — The Jerseyman is an altogether different proposition. Six Jerseymen out of ten do business in New York, and of those six five were born in Brooklyn when she was just Brooklyn. The Jerseyman is not, strictly speaking, a New Yorker. If New York is in disgrace he thanks his stars that he spends his nights in another State, but if New York wins a point he pats himself on the back and says: — "I'm here most of my waking time." The Jerseyman also is sorely tempted to sign his name as from New York when he is out in Chicago, for instance, and when he is in Europe he does do it.

Child — Well, papa, you have told me about foreigners who were New Yorkers, and about English-speaking people who were New Yorkers,

62 I've Been Thinking

and about Americans who were New Yorkers, but I want to know if there couldn't be a more perfect kind of New Yorker than any of these — one who was born in New York and who spoke English?

Papa — Why, yes, my child; there are thousands born in New York who speak English. They are hard and fast New Yorkers. Their parents were Germans and Italians and Frenchmen and Jews and Greeks, but they were born in New York and they speak English.

Child — Then, papa, they are the real New Yorkers, aren't they?

Papa — Well, I believe that they are considered to be the most patriotic New Yorkers because their New Yorkism is so new; but, my child, in this city of which we are speaking, this city of nearly four million inhabitants, there is a little class, without much influence, to be sure, but still self-respecting and respected

I've Been Thinking 63

by others, a mere handful, it is true, but a very intelligent handful.

Child — And who are they, papa?

Papa — They, my child, are the native American New Yorkers, whose parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, to the third and fourth generation, were born and brought up in New York.

Child — And who always spoke English?

Papa — Well, no. They spoke Dutch originally, but they have spoken English longer than the majority of the rest. Those are the real New Yorkers.

Child — I never heard of them. Where do they keep themselves?

Papa — One of them is the President of the United States.

Child — Oh, yes, of course. So he is a Simon-pure New Yorker?

Papa — Well, no; come to think of it, he isn't, because I believe his mother was a Southerner.

64 I've Been Thinking

Child — Well, do the Simon-pure New Yorkers sign their names as from New York?

Papa — Yes, my boy, they do, and they would like to be able to sign in a special colored ink to make it more emphatic.

Child — Well, papa, I suppose that if they could have kept out the foreigners and the English-speaking aliens and the Yankees and the Southerners and the Westerners, and just left New York for the real born and bred New Yorkers, New York would be even greater than it is?

Papa — No, no, my boy. No city ever gets to the top of the pile unaided. It is because of all these people who have come in to show New York how to misgovern itself that she is the greatest city on the Western Hemisphere and is destined to be the greatest city that the sun ever shone upon.

Child — And what will become of the real New York New Yorkers?

I've Been Thinking 65

Papa — They will disappear after a while.

Child — Why, papa?

Papa — Because it is getting to be the fashion to be born in the country.

Child — Oh!



NOW is the time of year when, as Chaucer said, "longen folk to gon on pilgrimages" and these good Americans go abroad and visit strange lands.

And some of them never forget that they are good Americans, but proclaim it wherever they go so that the foreigner laughs in his sleeve and says "There are those boastful Americans again. Methinks they do protest too much."

If you are sure deep down in your heart that on the whole you belong to a country that is a leetle the best on earth, you will do well to say nothing about it while you are abroad.

Just act so well that perfection of manners

66 I've Been Thinking

will come in time to mean something distinctively American, and then, when the foreigner sees a sober, well behaved, kindly man walking along the streets of his town he will say, "Ah, it is easy to see he is an American. There are no people in all the world as fine as they — not even my own countrymen."



I OFTEN wonder what would happen if some of the ladies who unblushingly meet our gaze in the advertising sections of our best magazines, and who dress no more warmly in winter than in summer, were to invade the body of their respective publications.

I think that there would be a general rush for the tall timber on the part of the self-respecting heroes and heroines and general utility men and women of the stories, because the standard of proper dressing is very different in the first hundred pages of the magazine

from what it is in the remaining two hundred and fifty.

In the matter of language I think that the general average is higher in the advertising sections, because dialect is practically unknown there, but the way the ladies (don't) dress would be enough to cause a flutter in the pages of the most unconventional story that one could find in a reputable magazine.

No one ever seems to be shocked at seeing ladies walking around in the advertising sections in patent underwear, and perhaps no one ought to be shocked — unless it is bachelors — but suppose you read in a serial of Howells' that "Anna Hamlin was in no danger from pneumonia because she always wore common-sense wearing apparel underneath that which is visible to the outer world" (see how carefully one has to express himself in the body of a magazine?) and a picture of Miss Hamlin were inserted at that place, one taken from the

68 I've Been Thinking

advertising section and with which the whole reading public is familiar. What a chorus of indignant protests would go up from outraged readers at the vulgarization of the magazine.

I tell you that circumstances will continue to alter cases whenever they can — that's what circumstances are for; and if an impudent young hussy strays in from the advertising pages and dares to stand for Anna Hamlin she will be shown her place at once because the American public will not stand for anything vulgar.

No, indeed!

What would happen if another leading novelist said in the course of his serial "that Grace Hastings attributed her good health to the fact that she always took a cold bath every morning," and the art editor in order to save expense put in that familiar cut of a lady bathing in the Jinkins' Portable Celluloid Bath Tub?

I've Been Thinking 69

Why, Anthony Comstock would foam at the mouth. And rightly so. But we are all so grateful at the absence of dialect in the advertising sections of our magazines that we let that lady stand in her tub throughout the twelve months without uttering a word of protest.

When I was a child I was taught that it was not nice to speak about corsets. If I had to mention them I must call them bodices or stays or — I forget what the third alternative was. I know I used to go out into the back-yard and holler "corsets" just because I thought it was pretty awful.

But our advertising men have changed all that. They not only talk about corsets, but they show us pictures of them, and, to go still further, they show us pictures of them in use.

The old convention as to the mention of corsets has also disappeared from fiction and one might easily come across such a sentence

as this: "Miss Postlethwaite had a wasp-like waist and there were not wanting those who said her corsets caused her agony."

But what would happen if a picture of Miss Postlethwaite's boudoir were shown with *rouge et noir* (for the cheeks and eyebrows) on her bureau and she herself fitted into one of Hug-gem's *papier-maché* corsets?

I know I'd stop my subscription at once.

Suppose, for an instant, that an artist were told to go to the Metropolitan Opera House and draw a picture of the Four Hundred in their boxes, six in a box, making something like sixty-seven boxes—with the lids off. Suppose that instead of drawing them in proper evening dress—a dress requiring 85 degrees Fahr.—he used a lot of pictures from the advertising section and put them in Jigger flannels, would he keep his position on the staff a moment? No, of course not. That would be a case where to put on more clothes

I've Been Thinking 71

would be to spoil the picture, and no one would recognize the Four Hundred at an opera with arctic habiliments upon them. An artist must be true to nature and he must not be vulgar.

Nothing is more confusing to a person's sense of propriety than to turn quickly from the advertising section to the body of the magazine and back again as I have seen persons do. The mental picture of the young lady who is braving the weather for the sake of showing that a bath tub can be ornamental as well as useful is transferred to the bucolic New England story and we Anglo-Saxons are shocked. There is no other name for it. It is very demoralizing to turn the pages rapidly back and forth. One should read the stories first and take comfort in the thought that no decent editor will allow any artist to picture any kind of vestiture that would not go at Asbury Park. Then let him brace himself and turn the leaves that lead to the tropic ladies. It is still Anglo-

Saxon, but it is advertising, and the conventions are different in that world.

A friend of mine who has no regard for people's feelings actually cut out a number of the advertisements in the back of a magazine that has led us on to a higher civilization for fifty years or more, and when I saw he had done it I applauded him. I said "Good, old man; they're better out." But the graceless chap with diabolical ingenuity fitted each flannel lady and each custodian of the bath into drawing-rooms devised by the staff artists of that magazine and I blushed for a good half hour. We Americans will not stand for semi-nudity in the wrong place. It's all very well at the opera or at a ball or a swagger dinner, but in the body of a reputable magazine the day will never come when it will be considered respectable. And the advertisers themselves will be the first to agree with me.

Back to your celluloid tub, oh, lady of the

I've Been Thinking 73

bath! We who are reading the serials will not look upon you.



MY dear young mother, will you pardon me if I address a few words to you upon the subject of Theodore? I have noticed for some time how vigilant has been your care for the manly little fellow. You will not let him play with Tommy Perkins in the summer because Tommy says "Gosh!" You have forbidden him to associate in the slightest degree with Eddy Conway because Eddy smokes cigarettes, and you have threatened to have his father chastise him if he has anything to do with Aleck Saunders because Aleck swears like a trooper in Flanders.

You have done all these things in order that Theodore's language may be free from the tares that might otherwise choke it; but have you been careful in all things? Have you seen

74 I've Been Thinking

to it that the records of the talking machine that you bought for his delectation are up to your own high standard of grammar and culture? I trow not.

A phonograph need not be vulgar if its early associates are of the proper kind, but I notice that many of them are vulgar. One gets the impression that they have copied the speech of coarse and uncultivated men. Phonographs have absolutely no creative ability, but they are, within certain limitations, absolute mimics and they have the knack of picking up the phrases of men whom you would never think of admitting to your drawing-room.

You were horrified the other day at the notion of letting dear Theodore go to one of the most respectable of continuous shows, but the new record that came to him that afternoon had mimicked word for word a monologue that never would have been allowed upon the boards of that theater. His little

I've Been Thinking 75

friends Aloysius and Van Sutphen and Saltonstall use an English remarkable for its purity of inflection and intonation, but that phonograph record has a diction unspeakably vulgar. It is not alone the thing it says, but the nasty way it says it, that makes it a poor companion for Theodore.

Pardon me, my dear young mother, but I can't help laughing at you just a little. You take Theodore to the symphony concerts that he may cultivate his musical taste, but I never hear him whistling any movement from Beethoven's, Schubert's or Schumann's symphonies. Yet that inexpressible street song that emerged from the phonograph last week was his in a half hour, both words, music — and vulgarity. I believe that Mrs. Perkins would have spanked Tommy if he had sung it in her presence, although she does tolerate his "Gosh!"

I really can't blame the talking machine. It has no conscience; it has no pride of ancestry

to keep it in the right way. It has simply a waxlike receptive capacity and absolutely no sense of selection. If it heard good songs and refined speeches it would undoubtedly repeat them, but as its associates are for the most part vulgar it is small wonder that with its remarkable imitative faculty it should pick up many words, phrases, ideas, and *leit motiven* that are objectionable. The fault is not with the phonograph; it lies with you, and it is to me inexpressibly droll to see you shielding Theodore from those pestilent fellows, Tommy, Eddy and Aleck, while you admit to the intimacy of your house those records that successfully imitate the tough whine, the illiterate grammatical construction and the at times disgustingly vulgar witticisms of the cheaper stage.

I am not standing up for Tommy Perkins or Eddy Conway or Aleck Saunders, but Theodore might imitate some of their good

I've Been Thinking 77

points at the same time that he learned to say "Gosh!" or to smoke corn-silk cigarettes. It is also possible to break up a tendency to swear and one may reason a boy out of the habit of acting as a chimney while incinerating corn silk.

But the tough accent once acquired is almost ineradicable, and I cannot conceive any good coming from Theodore's association with the uncanny voice which says, "Loidies an' gen'l'mun, de udder day I wouldn' have went to de t'eater on'y I chanst to meet a young dame on der street," etc.

A man is known by the cylinders he keeps.



ARE you dowdy?

If you are not, don't read this at all, but if you are, take my advice and secure a full-length photograph of yourself and study it. What may have escaped your attention

78 I've Been Thinking

in your own small mirror will be brought home to you in a portrait. Ask your friends if you are dowdy, and if they hesitate, even for a moment, in answering you, you are.

Having found out that you are dowdy, the next thing to do is to stop being dowdy.

If you are married, stop it because your husband doesn't like it.

If you are single, stop it because the young men of your acquaintance don't like it.

I can't tell the difference between a bolero and a polonaise: I am not an expert in feminine sartorial terminology, but I can tell a dowdy woman a block off and so can every other American man.

It is just as much an affront to your family to be a dowdy as it is to serve uninteresting dinners. Let your food be plain if need be, but let it be something that attracts the attention of the tongue and causes it to telegraph pleasant news to the stomach.

I've Been Thinking 79

So though your clothes be plain and inexpensive, make them interesting. If you have been married for some time and have always been dowdy, you will be surprised to see how the change in your get-up will affect your husband. He will begin to take notice and will tell you you're growing young again.

Get together in this, oh women, and the dowdy will become as extinct as the dodo.



"**I**T was the night before Christmas." How easy to write those words. How much literature has been started by that phrase! — but it didn't all turn out to be literature. Yes, that phrase was a good starter; it is the locomotive that draws a long and oftentimes heavy train of thought along ways covered with ice and snow, past the homes of the rich and poor; and the inevitable destination of each train is Merry Christmas.

80 I've Been Thinking

It is easy to get up steam and start your train along the rails — rails at the heartlessness of the rich; rails at the insincerity that accompanies the giving of presents; rails at the helpless condition of the poor, with so much money locked up in safes. You can get along on the rails all right for a time. But after the engine has gone a few feet — particularly if it be verse you are writing — the wheels revolve on the slippery track (and in your head) and it sometimes takes a heap of sand to get her a-going again.

You are approaching a crossing now. It is time to ring the bell. "Ring, happy bells, across the snow." Your Christmas story wouldn't be the real thing if you didn't work that in. It is now about time to stop and let your hero or heroine, or both, get aboard. And while the train waits pluck a few holly berries and mistletoe, for these are indispensable.

I've Been Thinking 81

Now you're off again. Is your hero going to be rich or poor? If poor, make him barefoot and have him wonder what he'll hang up in lieu of stockings for the visit of old Kris Kringle — be sure to call him by that quaint title at least once. If he be rich, clothe him in golf stockings, and it will puzzle the old saint how to fill them.

The train is slowing up again. It is here that the consumptive mother and the rich and surly uncle come aboard. Make the old man a Gradgrind. Buy a copy of Christmas Carols from the train boy, so you'll be able to get the right atmosphere for your story. Also open the window and let in a whiff of frosty air.

You'd better stop pretty soon for refreshments. Whether you're going to feed your characters on stale fish-balls and candle-ends or on a regular turkey dinner, a meal of some kind is absolutely necessary.

The journey hasn't been so bad thus far,

and you needn't make it much longer. Remember that the engineer and the reader are human and let up on them.

If your hero be poor make it all right with him, just as those bells are ushering in the dawn of Christmas; if he be rich, give him the usual change of heart, and from habitual and ingrained niggardliness and rasping ill-temper metamorphose him into a genial old philanthropist — it'll go, in a Christmas story.

Drop a few turkeys and cranberries on the poor consumptive's bed; let some kind-hearted old Hebrew in the sock business donate a dozen of the useful articles to the poor little barefoot boy, fill 'em up with candies and the usual outfit, and then have the brakeman stick his head in at the car-door and yell "Merry Christmas. Last stop!"



DOES it worry you to have your husband bring some men home to dinner? I mean do you feel afraid that your guest will notice that you have a misfit set of tableware and that your maid is not well trained?

Recollect that if your guest notices those things to your detriment he is not worthy of you.

You are just as good as the best person who could possibly visit you. If you're not it's your own fault.

Do the best you can with your service, be sure to have your food well cooked and palatably seasoned, and then treat your guest as simply as you know how.

If he acts as if he were better than you he surely is not as good as you. If he accepts your hospitality in the same spirit in which you offer it, he is all right and you'd better have him out again.

But it is not worth while for either you or

84 I've Been Thinking

your husband to bother with people who cannot accept your ways of living.

If the man who is coming out awes you because he is rich, try to remember some ancestor of yours who made the world better worth living in. If your guest awes you because of his culture, remember that you are trying to make life worth living to your husband and your children (perhaps you're not, but you really ought to).

But if the man who is coming awes you because of his blue blood, remember that kind hearts are more than coronets and tell him his grandmother was a monkey. It'll break the ice.



SOME one with a taste for figures was telling me the other day that since the formation of the United States somewhere back in the century before the last, only twenty-six Americans have become President—and not a single foreigner.

I've Been Thinking 85

Doesn't this fact put parents and teachers in rather an unenviable position as regards sincerity? Here we have to-day at least ten million innocent children in this broad land of ours, and nearly every one has been told that he has a chance to become President if he will only regard his book and be a good boy and do more right than wrong.

For my part, I think we ought to take our children aside and tell them frankly that they have mighty little chance. Think of a bright boy toiling on at school, avoiding athletics and burning the midnight oil and his brain as well — for there's as much consumption of brain as there is of midnight oil in these nocturnal studyings — think of him pushing on in every State in the Union hoping for the Presidency, while we know that for the next fifty years we can't expect to put more than five of the children of to-day into the great position.

For my part I'd say to my child: "Rollo,

there's the Presidency. It's a lottery. No man ever knew from the beginning that he was going to get it. Washington was real surprised, Hayes had his doubts even after election day, and Roosevelt often goes off by himself and says, 'Is it really possible that the former cowboy and literary man, the hero of thousands of young men, is President of this mighty people and might be yet again if he were to allow his name to be used?' But, as I say, my boy, it's a lottery, and this country of ours is opposed to lotteries — officially.

"Emerson," I would say, continuing the conversation — for you understand that this is a hypothetical case and that therefore the boy has got to stand still and listen — "Emerson said, 'Hitch your wagon to a star,' but you may make a mistake and hitch it to a comet and then, where is your wagon?"

"There are plenty of likelier horses, my son, and in these days of automobiles it isn't neces-

sary to hitch your wagon to anything. Just make up your mind where you want to go, be sure you have motive power enough to get there, and then turn on the current. But put the Presidency out of your mind once and for all."

The Presidency — I am not talking to my son now, but just to you, dear reader — the son escaped after all, hypothetical though he was — the Presidency is, as a general rule, equivalent to a life sentence. Few there be who survive its term of office many years. There have been solid exceptions, but as a general thing when a man has passed through four years of hand-shaking and politician-shaking he is willing to wrap the drapery of his couch around him as Bryant did at the age of nineteen. Bryant lived for some seventy years after, but no former President ever did. Not one.

And on the other hand Bryant never became President. There's Bryant who could and who did write "Thanatopsis" at the age of nineteen,

88 I've Been Thinking

and he's the only man in the history of the United States who ever wrote it, and he never became President, never in his life. And there's Andrew Johnson, who at the same age could neither read nor write, and he became President. Of course it's a lottery, and I'm opposed to lotteries on principle.

There came a day in my own life when I gave up all thought of being President. I said to myself: "It will be hard work to get the attention of the public in this thing. Many will not know who I am or where I came from, and perhaps if I do get the nomination on the independent prohibition or labor ticket I will wake up the day after election and find that some totally different person has won the prize, and I'll be extremely mortified and absolutely put to it to pay my legitimate election expenses — to say nothing of the illegitimate ones."

So I put this possible honor from me. Heavens! it wasn't that I did not appreciate

I've Been Thinking 89

the honor. A man has a right to feel proud when millions of his fellow citizens, many of them unable to read or write or think, elect him to the proudest position in the gift of any nation. I weighed the whole thing pro and con and then I said, deliberately and firmly, "No, sir, I am going to lead Wagner's simple life. I'm going to get simpler and simpler and perhaps I'll die contented."

Fellow citizens, there comes a time to all of us who have an eye on the Presidency when we must make up our mind to give up the contest or else accept the inevitable with calm steadfastness. I simply couldn't bear to be defeated for the Presidency. Do you suppose that I could read in the papers that I was snowed under in every State in the Union, and then calmly take a poem and try to sell it to an editor? No, sir! I'd use back streets for the rest of my life and write under a pen name. Cincinnatus hadn't been defeated for Senator

when he went back to the plough. The honor of election is great, but the mortification of defeat is greater.

Look at Horace Greeley. He wasn't content to be the Nestor of American journalism; he must try to be President. Said he'd rather be President than write.

The result was too lamentable to jest about. I was a mere boy at the time, but it saved me from the Presidency. It was the turning of the ways. Like Rutherford B. Hayes, I went into the egg business; but unlike him — or maybe it would be more accurate to say that like him — I never was President *de jure*. But that is a bygone. Twenty years ago if I had said that many people would have frothed at the mouth. Many people still froth at the mouth, but the froth is apropos of other matters. Significant name that — froth.

No, fellow countrymen, let us be contented. It is not likely that over twenty, at the outside,

I've Been Thinking 91

of those Americans who are now living will ever add luster to the Presidential chair — or even sit in it. Let the rest of us go about our business with contentment, and every four years let us elevate one of the twenty with a good grace, and for four years thereafter let every man mind his own business — and see that he has a business to mind — and this country will stride forward as it has not yet stridden — or is it strode?



ARE you fond of looking up your genealogy?

It's a good thing to be fond of, believe me, only don't let it stop at the mere getting of names and dates.

You believe that Theodore and Dorothea ought to study history at school. History is the account of the doings of races and it is very valuable. But the study of history in your own family cannot fail to be stimulating.

If you learn that Great-grandfather Smith was a murderer or a sheep stealer you can take great comfort in the thought that neither Theodore nor Dorothea shows any inclination to follow in his footsteps, and your optimism receives an impetus.

If, on the contrary, you find that Great-grandfather Smith was much beloved by his neighbors and tried to do his duty as the Lord gave him light, why there you have a good reason why Theodore and Dorothea should strive to be worthy descendents of such an ancestor.

It will be interesting to learn that that peculiar trick of holding her head on one side that Dorothea has was a peculiarity of Great-grandmother Robinson, and that Theodore's one-sided smile was remarked in Great-grandfather Brown as far back as 1793 in a diary kept by his schoolmate, Darius Woodruff.

And if Cousin John bends his elbow too

I've Been Thinking 93

often you may be less hard on him when you learn that Great-grandfather Jones could out-drink any man in Suffolk County and that his father was a "three-bottle man."

If you yourself are selfish and you read in a letter written just before the battle of Lexington that your great-great-grandfather was noted for his unselfishness you have an incentive to shape your life something like his.

If, on the other hand, you find out in some old record that your maternal great-great-grandfather was the most selfish man who ever rode a farm wagon into Boston it is surely high time that your family stopped being selfish.

Oh, yes, the minute study of family histories is diverting, stimulating, useful — and shocking.



DO you intend to become an essayist, gentle writer? Then learn the art of apt and apposite quotation. Quotations are not more desirable to a stock-broker than they should be to you. Cultivate Bartlett.

To plant in the bare sands of an arid imagination the borrowed flowers of the successful gardeners of literature is to prepare a parterre that shall please even the critical. For when a man not variously learned comes on a passage that he has himself read in the original setting, his vanity is tickled.

Tickle your reader's vanity often enough, and he is yours and will sound your praises. "A nightingale dies for shame if another bird sings better," but you who are not a nightingale might die for shame if it were not for the singing of that large chorus of English birds that make your songs possible. "Homer himself must beg if he wants means," and if Homer

I've Been Thinking 95

begs, who are you that says, "to beg I am ashamed"? See only that you beg at the right gates, and you shall enjoy a borrowed richness that in the minds of many passes for a home-made garment of great value.

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed," and others quoted. "Reading maketh a full man," not only that, but "out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and he who has read much and remembered much can write well.

"Discretion of speech is more than eloquence," and the most discreet man is the man who knows where to borrow to advantage. There be those who write original essays of which the best that may be said is, "It is his own." Better far the essay that glitters and sparkles with a thousand gems filched from the world's great lapidaries.

"Brevity is the soul of wit," but it does not follow that every postal card contains an epi-

96 I've Been Thinking

gram. The safest way to insure wit in your essay is to pick it where you find it, and ten chances to one that will not be in your own brain. Better the wit of others than no wit at all — which might be a proverb, but is not.

Shakespeare has well said, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." If this but applied to your essay, O writer! what an excellent thing it would be! But it lies not within your gray matter to compass it. Again, with the bard, you say, "I must become a borrower," and you walk down the pleasant gardens, plucking here and there a flower of fancy until your little essay stuns the eye with color. "Here's richness!"

Nothing that you can say but has been well said before; therefore quote it, fusing it, if you will, with your poor thought to decrystallize it and make it seem a new thing.

"Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words that ever blotted paper." Do not use them,

I've Been Thinking 97

then. Make your essay light, graceful, full of the whipped cream of human kindness.

"Silence is the perfectest herald of joy," says Will again, but had he kept silence, what joy the Anglo-Saxon race had missed, and how weak in quotation had been thy essay! Has not this same Shakespeare said, "What's mine is yours?" Therefore, do not scruple to take it if it will "make light where darkness reigned."

"Who would write well must first have loved." There you are. It is not "nominated in the bond" what you must have loved; therefore it may as well be books as any other thing. You have loved books, you have gathered of their honey; now let it drop from off your stylus and sweeten this essay over which you labor.

A sixteenth-century writer says, "They lard their lean books with the fat of others' works." There you have an old precedent, so fear not.

98 I've Been Thinking

You are in good company. You do but take what others have taken before. Quote you never so well, you do but requote, and it may be that he from whom you quote lifted his thought from a richer than he. It is well said that "a dwarf, standing on the shoulders of a giant, may see further than a giant himself," and if he can see further it stands to reason that he can be seen further. Your borrowed plumes will make you a marked man; that is, one who is "read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested."

"We can say nothing but what hath been said." Why attempt the impossible, then? "I would help others out of a fellow-feeling." I have been thought-dry myself. I dare say that there were mornings when John Milton said: "I had rather than forty shillings I had never begun 'Paradise Lost.' I have keyed it so high that it splits my throat to sing it."

"Angling is somewhat like poetry — men

I've Been Thinking 99

are to be born so." So angle that ye obtain the prize. Fish in other men's streams and a full basket will surely reward your perseverance. And when you have spread your wares in the market place, not one in ten will care who owned the fish originally. You will receive the credit even if you pepper your work all over with quotation marks.

Emerson says, "The passages of Shakespeare that we most prize were never quoted until this century." Do you not see that it was not what Shakespeare himself said that men valued? It was not until his jewels flashed in other men's bosoms that we perceived their luster. Therefore quote, for in so doing you will be rendering the bard a service.

Some one has said, "He that I am reading seems always to have the most force." Remember that, O gentle essayist! Do not scruple to help thyself, and having done so, to "take thy pen and write down quickly."

100 I've Been Thinking

"It is hard for an empty bag to stand upright," but thanks to your incursions into the fields of literature, your bag is full. Let it stand.



YOUR boy stands in awe of you.

That's a pretty bad state of affairs, if you don't mind plain talk.

Who are you, anyway, that he should stand in awe of you?

Weren't you a boy once? Isn't there a little remnant of boy somewhere in your heart yet?

I don't say that he ought not to respect you. I hope you respect him, but just remember that it is only a matter of twenty-five years that separates you. He came to this globe later than you, but he is doing the same act and you are really only brothers if you'd only look at it in that way.

I've Been Thinking 101

Get next to your boy.

Put him next to you.

If he stands in awe of you it may be nevertheless that he doesn't love you and it's a heap sight better for a boy to love his father than to think that his father is a little tin god on wheels.

Because you're not one. You may have the tin — and you may have the wheels, but there is mighty little that's godlike about you, more's the pity.

So just lay away that awful frown and learn to throw cart-wheels in the back yard and forget that you are so important.

Because on my word you are not important. We'd swing through space just as steadily with you off the map as we do now. And the boy, while he might look solemn, wouldn't feel half as bad as he would if you Brothered him a little more.

Take a shy at it.

102 I've Been Thinking

WHY is it that the importance of tags is so often undervalued? How are we to know whether a thing is good or not if we don't know who did it? How are we to know whether a man is to be treated with distinguished consideration and respect if he has no tag?

Let us put it in concrete form. Let us suppose a room full of men and women assembled for a musicale. They have come to be entertained by music which they presume is up to a certain standard, for they have some faith in the judgment of their hostess, whom we will call Mrs. Bushel; but it happens that she does not understand human nature, and she carelessly neglects to place a label on the young man who sits down to play, and what is the result? Why, he is rewarded with half-hearted applause. And he himself neglects to say that the piece he is playing is a well-known thing

I've Been Thinking 103

of Grieg's, and the audience is doubly handicapped. They see he plays well, but they do not wish to be led away by false enthusiasms.

Yet, as it happens, this young man is a great pianist, and not only that, but a man who in Dresden is beloved by the ladies — a second Paderewski. Imagine the chagrin of some of his auditors when they hear him the next evening at Mrs. Lionhunter's. She understands the value of tags. She buys them by the dozen at her stationer's. She goes around in her gushing, compelling way, and says: "Oh, I'm so glad you've come. Whom do you suppose I have captured for to-night? Albrecht Musikheim, the wonderful pianist from the Dresden Conservatory. He has played but once in this country, and then it was more of a rehearsal than anything else; at that impossible Mrs. Bushel's, who would extinguish Etna if she came near it. I have asked him to play that adorable thing of Grieg's

104 I've Been Thinking

that he composed for King Oscar. You have never heard piano-playing until to-night."

And then when the audience is assembled and quiet she leads Herr Musikheim in — on stilts — and all in the room are immediately swayed by his magnetism, and prepared to accept him before he touches the piano. Even you who heard him last night remember that you thought he was remarkable, although you forgot to say so.

He knows that his tag is on to-night, and he plays better for the knowledge. And you know that the piece he is playing is famous, and by Grieg at that, and you immediately predict his success in this country. But let me tell you, it will take plenty of tags and a good deal of ability, too, for some of these newspaper critics are really discerning. I say some of them are really discerning, and one or two claim that they can dispense with tags. I wonder!

I've Been Thinking 105

Years ago the magazines did not tag their articles unless they were by men who had been tagged for years, men like Anthony Trollope and Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. What was the result? Why, people had no opinion of American literature, but read English books in preference to those written by Americans. Then some magazine started the fashion of tagging: literary journals sprang up to puff those tagged, and it acted as a direct stimulus on the writers, and also enabled the readers to express intelligent opinions.

To-day, if we read an essay by Howells we know it is good; we feel that we are right in liking it, and we say so. But if the same essay were signed X. X. Smith, while we might be pleased at it, we would not go around saying, "Oh, have you read the essay of a man named Smith in the *Aroma*?" because it is rather ridiculous to enthuse over an unknown man.

Now and then the ordinary run of mortals

106 I've Been Thinking

enjoys the huge farce that is enacted when a number of art critics dispute as to whether a newly discovered picture is by one of the old Dutch masters or not. The picture has swallowed its tag, and they are all at sea. There are two sides to the question, and equally eminent critics take opposing sides.

Is it an old but hideous daub by some strolling Haarlem sign-painter, or is it one of the best examples extant of Ruysdael? The question is not an easy one, and experts have to be called in. If it is by an unknown and crude sign-painter it naturally possesses only such value as clings to an antique of any sort, but if it is one of the best examples extant of the great Ruysdael there are a dozen millionaires who are willing to pay thousands for it.

It is a pretty question, and it furnishes employment for the experts. But it shows the necessity for tags, and I dare say that somewhere in the vast unknown Ruysdael and the

I've Been Thinking 107

itinerant painter are splitting their sides over the discussion. Only it is a little humiliating — to Ruysdael — that his picture is not its own tag.



A MAN said to me the other day that he thought it was time that people stopped “knocking” men who had made their millions; that a by-product of the making of vast fortunes was the development of our country and that the multi-millionaire was a benefactor of the race.

Now it seems to me that one of the joys of life would be gone if a fellow couldn't have his fling at the man who has corralled more of the root of all evil than he himself has been permitted to win.

When Mr. Smith, who has had hard work to scratch \$2,000 a year out of this hard old earth of ours, reflects that at any rate he has always

108 I've Been Thinking

been honest, it is a distinct pleasure to him to hear that old Goldbaggs, who is worth fifty million, made \$49,999,999.99 by unscrupulous methods and that the odd cent was given him.

It is a pleasure to a generous-minded man to feel that if he had always looked out for number one, if he had never allowed personal considerations to come between him and the coveted dollar, he too would be, if not a fifty-millionaire, at least very rich.

Surely a man who has landed his fortune is not so thin skinned and lacking in blood that he will begrudge a poor devil the fun of taunting him with his dishonesty.

If I genially hope that some of these wicked plutocrats may end their days behind prison bars, it does not hasten that day for them, while it does give me a warm glow around the cockles of my heart to harbor such a wish, for I feel that it is echoed by thousands of poor fellows like myself who have been prevented

I've Been Thinking 109

by honesty — or other reasons — from amassing a fortune.



THE editor of the paper was an agnostic. Fifty years ago he would have been called an infidel, but we have softened our speech in some ways. Now, although he was an agnostic and really knew nothing of a future life, he was the editor of a live paper and he had to observe the times and seasons; therefore, when by the calendar he saw that Easter was near at hand, he determined to get up an Easter number, sparing no expense to make it something that would appeal alike to art lovers and to the multitude.

But, although the editor was an agnostic, it is not to be understood that he was a bad man. This is not a fable, where everything is told in symbols, and where all the characters are types. He was a good man, a kindly man,

110 I've Been Thinking

and if men get into heaven by good deeds alone (and there are those who say they do) this agnostic was certain of a happy immortality. Can you imagine a more pleasant surprise than for a man to die an agnostic, after a well spent life, and to awake a celestial being, knowing for a fact what he had all his life doubted?

Among his corps of writers there was a young Hindoo with one of those names that rouse laughter among the unthinking. In the office, where he was cordially liked, he was called "Dan" for short, and that name will do as well as his own. He was a word poet, and he handled the English tongue with an ease that many an American envied.

The Hindoo was also a good man, although that is neither here nor there. He could project himself into a subject until his whole being was saturated with it, and he had written a Russian story that more than one Russian

I've Been Thinking 111

expert attributed to Turgenieff. He could do anything in words and he could weave you a story of the Norse mythology and set it forth in a dress of brighter colors than would have been possible to a man of Scandinavian imagination. So when the editor was casting about for the proper person to write him an Easter allegory he turned naturally to "Dan." And he sent for him and said to him quite seriously: — "I want you to write me an allegory about the Resurrection. I want something that will appeal to church people. Nothing theatrical, but simple and human. You understand?"

"I understand," said this young Hindoo, and then he went to an art gallery and looked at those pictures that would help him, and after that he went to his lodgings and cast himself upon the floor and gave his imagination free play for an hour, and then rose and wrote the allegory in an hour and then wrote it once again; and after that he let it alone, for he knew

I've Been Thinking

that every added touch would take something of spontaneity from it.

So he brought it to the editor, who read it through and said quite seriously: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The allegory having been written, it remained to have it illustrated, and now for once the editor had some thought of the fitness of things, and he said to himself, "I must get a Christian to illustrate this," and he called his artists in and said to each one in turn, "Are you a Christian?"

And it was astonishing the answers he received. Most of the men growled out a negative; some blushed and said nothing, but none gave an affirmative answer until he came to a young Catholic, who said modestly, but in a manly tone, "I hope so, sir."

"Well, Michael, you won't be able to illustrate this story, as it is entirely out of your line. I want a picture of the Resurrection,

I've Been Thinking 113

and the public would think it sacrilege if your pen, which is always associated with comic work, should do this."

"I guess they would, sir," said Michael.

"Well, then, I'll have to get one of you men that aren't Christians to do it."

Then one of the artists spoke up and said:—

"Well, we may not be Christians, but we aren't anything else. That is, we used to go to church when we were kids."

"That's so," assented several.

"But," said the editor, "I don't think any one of you can do the kind of work that will fit the story that 'Dan' has turned in. It's too good for so ephemeral a thing as a newspaper and it ought to go into a magazine and be illustrated by an Elihu Vedder or some other great symbolist—meaning no disrespect to you boys."

"Ignace Borowski can do it, Mr. Paine," said one of the artists. "He won't draw news-

114 I've Been Thinking

paper pictures forever. He's as ambitious as they make 'em, and he's a crackerjack of a man for that symbol business."

All the other artists assented to this, and when Borowski, who had been at home with a cold, came to the office next day the agnostic gave him the Resurrection allegory by the Hindoo, and told him to read it through and do his prettiest in the way of illustrating it.

Now, Borowski was a Polish Hebrew, who had come to this country with his parents when he was four years old. But he had a knowledge of English literature that is vouchsafed to few Americans of nineteen, and he had that wonderful temperament that is found so often among the Polish Hebrews. He was an artist to his finger tips. He had steeped himself in the best examples of art to be found in this country, having gained admittance to many private galleries through the good offices of a millionaire compatriot, and added to that he

I've Been Thinking 115

had condensed into twelve months' study the work of a three years' course in art instruction, and, as the boys said, he was not long for a newspaper office.

He read the allegory that noon and his sympathetic soul recognized a kindred spirit in the work of the Hindoo, and by afternoon he was hard at work on the illustration, having obtained permission to do the work at home, where he would be free from all distracting influences.

He felt he had lived a lifetime when his fellow artists saw his work. They were generous in their praise. There was no jealous feeling at all. These Americans were honestly proud of their Hebrew brother, and the praise of one's fellow craftsmen outweighs a whole theaterful of others.

And now comes the conclusion of the whole matter. The story was unsigned, the picture had nothing but initials, and the great public

116 I've Been Thinking

did not know that the editor was an agnostic; but the day after the publication of this agnostic-Hindoo-Hebrew story of the Resurrection admiring letters began to come in from the Christian public, and more than one confessed that the beautiful allegory and the spiritual picture had been in the nature of an uplift.

But let this letter tell its story.

"TO THE EDITOR OF —:

"*Dear Sir*, — I am not much on doctrines or forms, but I recognize Christianity and brotherly love when I see them, and I want to tell you how much good that allegory and its accompanying picture did me. No man who was not good could have done either story or picture, and I wish you had printed the names of the author and artist. That page represented real Christianity, and I want to thank you for it.

"ONE WHO HAD DOUBTED."

"They do His will," said the thoughtful man who had known.



IT is only a question of time when everybody will have an automobile. And when everybody owns an automobile there will be little need for horses and the breed will begin to die out.

And when the breed begins to die out, it follows as a matter of course that horses will become more valuable.

And after another while to own a horse will be a badge of exclusiveness. And as by that time the possession of automobiles by every Tom, Dick, and Harry will have made them too plebeian a method of locomotion for the well-to-do, horses will come into increasing favor and will be used all over the country by the rich.

And as there are more rich people every year in this blessed country, so consequently

118 I've Been Thinking

there will be more horses until at last the social climbers will aspire to have horses also.

And by that time an enterprising proletariat here and there will have found out that there is a joy to be obtained from the handling of a horse that is not yielded by the mastery of insensate steel, and when that time comes the automobile will be doomed, all automobiles will be converted into junk, and the neighing of horses shall be heard in the land. *Selah.*



A PLUTOCRAT, an aristocrat, a scientist, and a pugilist found themselves traveling together. They were all of a size, each one was inclined to be arrogant, and while they were outwardly polite to each other there was not a man among them who did not look down upon the other three.

And a proletariat walked afar off, beneath the contempt of any one of them.

I've Been Thinking 119

In the course of their journeyings the four entered into a great building devoted to trade and full of men of business, who as soon as they saw the plutocrat began bowing to him and asked him to come and take the highest seat. "For," said they, "you began with one cent and now you have a thousand millions."

The aristocrat sniffed, the scientist sneered, and the pugilist snorted, but there was no doubt of it that if every dog has his day the plutocrat was now having his.

But the proletariat walked afar off, beneath the contempt of any one of them.

After a season they left the hall of the men of trade and traveled to an antique Colonial mansion, which they entered. And here the aristocrat took precedence, and, while the other three were treated with civility, it was he to whom the honors were paid. "For," said one, "his line runs back for many generations, traced in the bluest blood."

120 I've Been Thinking

And the plutocrat said: "Why, I can buy him out."

And they bowed the plutocrat out.

The pugilist jeered audibly at the family pretensions and he also was asked to go outside.

The scientist sneered to himself, but he was suffered to remain, for an ancestor of the aristocrat had been a patron of a scientist of the fifteenth century, and there was a tradition in the family that it was quite the proper thing to condescend to science.

Now the scientist was plainly bored at the rigid etiquette and ceremony of the place, and after a time he rejoined his companions, who were waiting outside, and in a little while the aristocrat came out also, being of a restless temperament and loving travel.

But the proletariat walked afar off, beneath the contempt of any one of them.

It so happened that in their travels they came to a university and all four entered it.

I've Been Thinking 121

And now it was the scientist who was honored and was invited to a chair, the chair of learning. Whereat the pugilist openly scoffed.

And he went out—with undergraduate help.

For in those days pugilism had not been recognized as one of the fine arts.

And the plutocrat said: "What's the matter with my giving a million dollars to this institution? I guess my name will then last as long as that of the scientist."

But he was not a good guesser.

The aristocrat said: "I understand the reason for these honors to our good friend the scientist. What a pity the fellow has not blood as well as brains."

And the proletariat walked afar off, beneath the contempt of any one of them.

After a time they took up their travels again and came to a great stadium where games and trials of strength were in progress. And it was free to all in honor of the birthday of the

122 I've Been Thinking

ruler of that country. Yes, even the proletariat was there!

The pugilist had begun to swagger as soon as he had come in sight of the stadium, and when the multitude saw him they let forth great cheers, and said, "Make way for the only champion!" And he took a seat of honor, glad that his three companions had lived to see this day.

But the scientist drew back in disgust and marveled that the world should worship brawn.

As for the plutocrat, he said, "I could give every man in this crowd a thousand dollars and never notice it."

But he didn't do it.

The aristocrat was once more in his element, and he proceeded to patronize the pugilist and took him off to introduce him to some of his titled friends. For it is known that for ages the Bluebloods have patronized sport.

I've Been Thinking 123

On a sudden a great outcry arose in the stadium. Smoke was seen, and cries of fire were heard, and men rushed hither and thither, and the crowd swayed backward and forward, seized with a panic that each moment grew more wild. And in the thick of the crush was the proletariat, who was as poor as the pugilist and as innocent of muscle as the scientist and as destitute of blood as the plutocrat and as weak of intellect as the aristocrat.

But being a brave man he stood his ground undaunted and called upon the crowd to stop its mad rushing, and his voice was charged with magnetism, so that the crowd obeyed him and a great disaster was averted. But he himself was crushed to death.

That night the other four were summoned hence also, and it came to pass that all five stood before the Gate of St. Peter, who asked each one in turn to give an account of himself.

124 I've Been Thinking

Said the pugilist, "I've knocked out more men than any prize fighter who ever lived."

"Stand aside," said St. Peter, sternly, looking toward the nethermost regions.

"I," said the scientist, "gave my whole life to the propagation of the theory that an apple cannot rise from the grass to a tree on account of the law of gravitation."

"How did that benefit humanity?" asked St. Peter.

"I was not thinking of humanity," said the scientist.

"Stand aside," said St. Peter.

The aristocrat advanced with beribboned cap in hand and, bowing, said: —

"There is no doubt that I will be admitted. I am Percival Blueblood, patron of learning and the fancy and a gentleman. Please direct me to the bath."

"Stand aside," said St. Peter.

Then the plutocrat advanced and said: —

I've Been Thinking 125

"I am the richest man in the world and I want an extra commodious suite. I have done a great deal of good with my money since I turned fifty."

"How many people blessed you for the way you made your money in the first place?" asked St. Peter.

"Well, to tell the exact truth — as a man ought to do at such a time as this — I was cursed not a little in my early years, but I gave a hundred thou —"

"Stand aside," said St. Peter.

Last of all came the proletariat, who said:

"What are the qualifications, St. Peter?"—

And St. Peter said:—

"How far can you trace your ancestry back?"

"I do not know of a certainty who my father was."

"Umph!" said St. Peter. "How much wisdom have you absorbed?"

"I never went to school."

I've Been Thinking

"Worse and worse," said St. Peter. "How many men have you knocked out in the arena or in business?"

"I am afraid I never knocked any one out. I tried to keep within my rights and meddled with no one. I lacked initiative, I am afraid."

"Umph!" said St. Peter. "Well, how much money have you given to the poor?"

"I had none to give. I tried to make it up by —"

St. Peter interrupted him: "How about that time you quelled the panic at the stadium?"

"Oh, that wasn't anything! Any one would have done that."

"How is that?" said St. Peter, addressing the four who had been told to stand aside.

"He was worth a hundred men that day," said the plutocrat, unable to express himself save in terms of comparative values.

"He showed a self-sacrifice worthy of a scientist," said the man of learning.

I've Been Thinking 127

"He acted like a thoroughbred," said the aristocrat.

"He was a man all right," said the pugilist, holding out his hand to the pauper.

"Come in," said St. Peter to the proletariat, who left his companions and entered in.

"We might as well continue our journey together," said the aristocrat, with a shrug of his shoulders.



SHOULD a man give up his seat in a car to a woman?

If a woman has the same rights as a man (and she should have) the man need not give up his seat, because if a man has the same rights as a woman (and he should have) it does not follow that she should give up her seat to a man who was standing.

But the question involved is not one of rights but of chivalry, and by common con-

128 I've Been Thinking

sent of ourselves, the scrambling, pushing, money-getting Americans are the most chivalrous nation on earth in their attitude toward woman.

I do not always give up my seat to a standing woman, but I will confess here and now that when I do not I feel all through my journey, or as long as she is standing in front of me, that I am a particularly small and unattractive breed of worm. Sometimes this humiliation on my part results in my getting up tardily and offering her my seat; sometimes I fight it out with myself and say, "Sit still, you worm, you have a right to this seat and if you do get up and give it to this woman you know perfectly well that you will have a 'holier than thou' feeling toward every other sedentary man in the car, and it is better to be a rude worm than a polite prig."

And so I go on sitting, but I am not comfortable, and I don't suppose any true-blue Ameri-

I've Been Thinking 129

can is comfortable if he is sitting while a woman stands in front of him.

For in the last analysis we are chivalrous.



I HAVE come to the conclusion that when I'm in a department store I am invisible.

Now, you know when a man goes up to the handkerchief department and says in fairly strong tones, "Please let me look at your slightly soiled Irish linen real gentlemen's handkerchiefs at thirty cents a dozen marked down from three dollars on account of stock taking," and the young woman addressed looks right through him to the lady behind him and asks her what she wants, it stands to reason that the man must be invisible. It has happened to me and it really gave me an uncanny feeling. I hate to go into a crowd in a department store for fear that I will become invisible, and then maybe a pickpocket will go through me.

130 I've Been Thinking

But to drop foolish persiflage, there's another reason why I feel that I'm invisible in a department store, and that is because the young wom — the young ladies — talk right along as if they didn't see me even if I cough and stand on my tiptoes. Now, if I was looking right at a certain space and suddenly a cough came out of that space, and yet I saw no man, I'd stop talking and begin to shiver, although I'm not superstitious; but these salesladies are evidently quite used to hearing coughs come from invisible men, for they go right on, only pausing to take breath, and sometimes I blush in my invisibility — by the way, I'd dearly love to see an invisible blush — wonder what color it is — I say I blush because their talk is not only so intimate, but often so acrimonious.

Now, they say you won't hear acrimonious talk at the higher priced places, but — you know how it is. Times aren't what they were a year or two ago, and if I can get good handker-

I've Been Thinking 131

chiefs for the washing at six cents apiece what's the use of going to a Fifth avenue store where one hears nothing but the most high-bred talk and pays for it when he buys his handkerchiefs?

Besides, in some of those higher priced shops there is an air of hauteur, a sort of French aristocracy atmosphere that chills me so that I forget what I came for and am glad to escape to the more democratic street. There's no feeling of universal — er — sisterhood at those swell places. The young ladies — young princesses, I should say — glide around noiselessly and use the broad a, and their tones are so chilly that it seems almost an insult to ask them for twenty-five-cent socks. And, besides, they always charge fifty cents for them in those places.

No, in the present state of the market, and considering my bringing up, give me cheaper places, even if I do become invisible in them.

Now, the other day, I went into a store to

132 I've Been Thinking

get a pair of mittens — my hands get real cold in the winter, and I find that mittens are much warmer than gloves. They say that you can dress in almost anything in New York and not attract notice, but when I put on a silk hat and a sack coat over a cardigan jacket — warmest thing in the world a cardigan jacket, and only a dollar and a half if you look for bargains — and then draw on my brown and orange worsted mittens and walk up on the dollar side of Fifth Avenue, I always feel that I am no longer invisible. Lucky that I don't care. I'd rather be comfortable than fashionable.

The other day I was reading Herbert Spencer's "Philosophy of Style" — when a writer dies I always read just enough of him to be able to talk understandingly about him, and make people think I know a heap about him — it's so handy at teas, you know. Well, as I was saying, I was reading Spencer's

I've Been Thinking 133

"Philosophy of Style," in a pocket edition, and I went in to see a broker friend down in Wall Street, one of those pink-of-fashion men, you know, and as he was busy I sat down and read Spencer. When he came out he saw the book, and reaching out he took it from me and read the title, "Philosophy of Style."

He looked at my high hat and my cardigan jacket and my mittens, and then he said: "Very appropriate. Is there a chapter on gum shoes?" glancing at my easy rubbers.

Well, of course, I didn't mind. I said to him good-naturedly: "Well, Jack, you go in for money and clothes, but as for me, give me comfort and brains."

"You have the comfort all right," said he.

But I'm jestproof. Good heavens! there is no man living but has his foible, and if it pleases Jack to laugh at mine — why, let him. If I went in for being a glass of fashion and a mold of form I would only make myself

134 I've Been Thinking

ridiculous and be uncomfortable into the bargain; so I say, "Why not let 'em know you don't think you're a leader of fashion?" and I dress accordingly. And if you'll try those mittens you'll be a good deal warmer. They beat castor gloves all hollow and they're only one-tenth of the price. Twelve and a half cents for each mitten.

I tell you that just as soon as you get to the point where you don't care whether you make a guy of yourself or not you find that you can put money in the bank even on your slender salary. That is, you can if you don't have to blow it in on bread for the children. This bread for the children is what is keeping thousands of men in the straight and narrow way. There'd be more drunkards and more merry-making of all kinds if it wasn't for this eternal bread-buying.

This talk of college is foolishness. Let a young man begin by supporting the old man,

I've Been Thinking 135

and when he has supplied him with the luxuries that the father went without in order that the boy might have bread, and incidentally has learned a great deal more of the world than they teach at most colleges, then let him take a term or two at Harvard so as to give him the ability to move easily about in one of those high-priced stores among the princesses. But the knowledge of the world should come first along with the daily roll for the old gentleman.

And if after reading this any one can see through me it proves what I started out to prove — that I'm invisible.



A CERTAIN enormously wealthy Parvenu, who thought he had a love for art, but who bought by name and fame only, expended \$20,000 for which he secured five small, but fine, examples of the Barbizon

136 I've Been Thinking

school. And as soon as the French pictures were hung in his drawing-room there appeared to him out of the Everywhere a man who said:

"You have five magnificent paintings for which you paid magnificent prices. It will doubtless console the painters, who are wandering in Shadowland, to know that the work that would hardly buy them bread when they were upon earth will now keep an art dealer in plenty for a lifetime. But why have you not bought beautiful American pictures? You are not French. It is true that art has no nationality, but you should foster the art of the men who live under the same flag as you, even as you profess to protect the interests of your workingmen."

And the Parvenu said: "I am an American of the Americans and believe in American engines and American pluck and American brains, but those French make a business of

I've Been Thinking 137

art, and I am told that American artists are merely imitators."

"Fool!" said the ghostly visitor. "Look!"

And a vision appeared before the Parvenu and he saw a lover of art clad in the peculiar fashion of fifty years hence. And he was buying five small American pictures, for which he willingly paid \$50,000.

And when the Parvenu saw the prices they had fetched he said: "When were those painted and by whom, for they must be beautiful to be worth so much."

"Beautiful were they before ever a price was set on them," said the ghostly visitor. "Beautiful also were these, for which you have expended a fortune, when their creators finished them and sold them for a handful of francs to keep the pot boiling. These pictures that you see being bought fifty years hence are the works of American contemporaries of yours. To-day they are picking up a living in the

138 I've Been Thinking

West, in New York, in New England, and are thankful to keep body and soul together that they may work at the art they love. Fancy what they would think if a millionaire of feeling, having eyes to see and an understanding to appreciate the poetry of their landscapes, should pay generous prices for these painted poems that are going for little more than the cost of the paint that is in them. For then, my friend, these artists would not need to wait until they reached Shadowland before they heard that their names had become famous."

"Lord, give me eyes to see," said the Parvenu, as the vision vanished.



IN some recent magazine stories the thing that counts seems to be not so much what the people do and say as where and how they say it.

I've Been Thinking 139

Let us discover two characters in the parlor, and open the conversation in this way:

Charles Darcey rose to his feet and gazed first at Marie and then at a steel engraving.

Marie's eyes followed his, and then went beyond and back of him to a French mirror. It was at least a minute before Charles spoke, and in that time his hazel eyes traveled around and took in seven chairs, the armchair, the sofa, the desk, and the curtains.

Nor were her eyes idle, even though she did not speak. She looked at the handsome Turkish rug, at the cartridge paper on the wall — it was a robin's-egg blue — at the chandelier and then at him.

"I don't know what to say," said he at last, casting his eyes upon the Japanese rug.

"Why have you called, then?" said she, opening a magazine with nervous fingers and reading some of the advertisements.

"I came," said he, as he played with a silver

140 I've Been Thinking

paper-cutter that had been secured at a bargain sale, "to say good-by."

"Good-by?" she said in questioning tones, rising and sniffing a Maréchal Niel rose that was stuck in his button-hole.

He looked intently at an etching by Field which hung over the desk. It depicted a sylvan scene in the depths of winter; but he did not think of that. "Yes, good-by," he said, dropping the paper-cutter inadvertently.

It fell with a tinkling sound upon the marble center-table and thence to the India rug. The sound roused Marie.

"Well, then I suppose we must part."

"Your supposition is the right one," said he, taking up a ten-cent monthly.

She picked up a copy of the latest novel and opened at the last chapter. It might have had a significance, but if it had it escaped her. A fly flew in at the window and settled on her cheek, but she did not notice it.

I've Been Thinking 141

Charles leaned forward and brushed the fly from her delicate cheek. He had ceased to care for her, but he was not above doing her a common courtesy. He read a short poem in the ten-cent monthly. At last he said, "You have not answered me."

"I did not know that you had asked me anything," she replied, turning her head so as to see the little oil painting of a flock of sheep, which her father had won at a raffle.

"Oh, Marie, don't you understand me?" he cried in tones of anguish, as he stepped to the mirror and tied his cravat.

Marie was silent. She did not understand him. She hated herself for it, and tapped the Smyrna rug with her foot as she had seen actresses do under stress of feeling.

Charles rose and walked to the door. He turned and looked over the shoulder of his pepper-and-salt suit. All was at an end.

142 I've Been Thinking

Marie picked up a magazine and looked at the pictures.

There was a sound of a closing door. Marie was alone with the book and magazines, the paper-cutter, the seven chairs, the armchair, the sofa, the center-table, the mirror, the desk, the lace curtains, the pictures, and the Syrian rug.

The lunch bell rang.

She hastened to the dining-room.



JUST a heart-to-heart talk upon the twin subjects of servants and murders. One naturally leads to the other.

And, at the start, I want to say that I totally disapprove of servants as a subject of conversation. The trials of housekeepers should be a tabooed topic. And I will say the same of murder trials.

For myself, I make it a point never to read

I've Been Thinking 143

about murders. I can get all I want from the headlines. To be sure, there are exceptions to every rule; there was Robin Graves, who murdered his great-grandmother on a dare from his fellow medical students. I didn't read anything about it, but I heard people discussing it, and it had elements of interest in it. And I always thought that Probyn-Clew case far from dull. You may remember that Probyn sent Clew a poisoned caramel on the very day that Clew sent Probyn a poisoned peppermint, and the papers were full of it. I gathered enough to enable me to hold my end up when I encountered a person with bad enough taste to discuss the subject. It was deplorable the way people harped on that case.

Then take the affair of the landlady who murdered all her boarders because they resented a raise in the price of board. What a mine of wealth that was to the reporters! My paper had six columns a day for twenty days, and I

just *had* to read that because there was nothing else, but politics, in the paper; but I felt that it was no subject for a person of any refinement. Yet I knew one man who makes quite a pretense of being up in the English classics, and he knew every point in the trial. I could not trip him up on a single bit of evidence. That experience just about destroyed my faith in humanity. My brother said that I talked of nothing else but that trial, and he was quite right. I was completely absorbed in trying to find some person who knew nothing of it. And at last I did find an old lady who never reads the papers. She had not even heard about it. She wanted to discuss one of Fiske's books on evolution, but I said, "See here, Mrs. Delancey, you're a *rara avis*. You're the first person I've met who has not heard about this unique series of murders, and I'm just going to tell you the whole story so that you may see for yourself what it is that fills people's

I've Been Thinking 145

minds in these degenerate days." And so I told her the whole story and she listened breathless; this cultivated woman was positively as interested as if she had been a policeman, off (or on) duty, and discussing shop with a brother officer. Oh, I was sickened.

After a while she wanted to shift off to evolution so that she wouldn't dream of the horrible murders, but I looked at my watch and saw that I had a train to catch, and again Fiske was side-tracked. Fiske, with his lucidity and logic and sweet reasonableness, was side-tracked for a horrible murder.

Just as I was coming away I asked my hostess, casually, if she remembered the Bond Street murder, and she did remember that, for her father lived on the very same block at the time it was committed. I actually missed my train because I sat down to hear her talk about it. It was like a bit out of Ainsworth. I was not born when it happened, and she was but

146 I've Been Thinking

a girl, but her father had the bad habit of discussing such things in the presence of his children, and it had made such an impression upon her infant mind that here she was retailing it to me. As a bit of local history contemporaneous with the days of Irving and Cooper, it had a certain value; and that is what appealed to me.

But to return to servants. There is absolutely no excuse for talking about the Bridgets and Christinas and Maries and Dinahs that come and go.

Mind you, I am not narrow-minded; there are circumstances that alter cases. If there is a servant who excites your interest in humanity, it is allowable to talk about her. Now we had a maid for a couple of days last week who had evidently seen better days and many of them. The way she broke crockery showed that she did not do it with malice prepense, nor yet out of sheer carelessness as an ordinary

I've Been Thinking 147

maid would have done. She had evidently been used to being waited upon and had no manual dexterity whatever. In fact she told me that she had never lived out before. Her name was Mamie Brannigan.

We had one girl who refused to go when her day was up. She was absolutely worthless as a cook, but she liked her room, and she wanted to board with us. My mother wanted me to eject her forcibly, but I am not a bouncer — and she was. Anyway, I felt it was a sort of compliment to our house that she wanted to stay, and so we allowed her to keep the room. She paid board and we handed her money over as wages to her successors. .

Servants are queer any way you look at them; but this everlasting talking about them, when we are surrounded by art and literature and the good deeds of philanthropists, makes me wonder what we are coming to. I think

148 I've Been Thinking

that men are almost as bad as women in this matter. A man is just as likely to be interested in our case of the servant-boarder as a woman is, and I never go out anywhere where there are some strangers present, but I am asked to tell about her, and that always starts the servant question; and I am generally asked to take the floor, because we *have* had such queer experiences.

I have time for only one more anecdote, but I must tell that. Summer before last mother got a treasure of a cook. She could cook, she was respectful and respectable, she didn't break and she was honest, but ——

Well, her "but" was that she would not go to the mountains. Now we take a furnished house in the mountains every summer, but we can't get a servant up there, and Nadjezda (she's a Pole) could not be induced to go. So we went without her, and she lived in our city house on half wages all summer long and

I've Been Thinking 149

cooked for herself, while mother went to the mountains and cooked for herself. Still, it was a sort of comfort to think that somewhere we had a capable cook cooking.

I sometimes wish that some of the incapable ones could be cooking somewhere.



YOU were thinking yesterday, my good woman, that you were a little better than the lady who called on you although she has more money than you.

But are you really better than she?

Your husband is a salaried man and her husband is an oil magnate.

Of course that does not necessarily make her any better than you, because we all know that your husband had a college education and her husband was a day laborer.

But why should your husband's education or her husband's wealth have anything to do

150 I've Been Thinking

with you or her? Let us cut the husbands out of the proposition.

Well, then, she has more money than you.

Does that make you any better than she? Is the lack of money an unmixed blessing carrying with it social superiority?

She (with a certain touch of vulgarity, owing to her ancestors, which you have not, thanks to your ancestors) has a much kinder heart than you have.

She honestly tries to be herself in spite of the money she has, while you have social ambitions that cause you to be snobbish.

You think you are better than she.

She never thinks about social status.

You feel bitter toward her because her husband is immensely wealthy.

She feels well disposed toward you because she thinks both you and your husband are clever — and with her, clever has a better meaning than the commonly accepted one.

I've Been Thinking 151

No, in spite of her money and her position she is more of a woman than you are in spite of your blood and your husband's education.



CLEON told me the other day that being of a mind to own sets of Balzac and Shakespeare, neither of which he happened to have in his bachelor apartments, he dropped a line to a well-known publisher and the next day the delivery wagon stopped at his door, the books were handed out, his man took them in, and that was the end of it. Oh, no, not quite the end; when he settles his bills for the quarter he will pay for his books.

Now I dare say that Cleon will get some good from his books because he is really fond of reading when it doesn't interfere with his golf. And he purchased handsome editions, fresh from the binder's, spick-span and flawless, with never a dog's ear or a crease in the leather.

152 I've Been Thinking

But he had no fun out of the buying. He saw an advertisement, he sent in an order, and almost by magic the books were on his table. Yet think of the price he pays for them! Two hundred good dollars.

Yesterday I had some money to spend. I say I had money to spend. Don't think for a moment that money that buys shoes and sacks and sheetings and socks is money spent. If that were the case I could be said to spend money every day of my life, for my children will walk on their feet, and they demand protection from the elements no matter how high may be the price of cloth. No, the money I had yesterday was a gift to be actually spent as foolishly as I might devise.

Like Cleon, I too wanted books, for your circulating library is only a temporary assuager of literary hunger and one book owned is worth three "taken out." But ten dollars will not carry one as far as will two hundred unless

I've Been Thinking 153

care is taken and discrimination is used. So I went, not to a store where they deal in books fresh from the mint, but to a shop devoted primarily to the cause of dry goods where they were having a "hurt book" sale, and if you will believe me, the very first thing that assailed my eye was a set of Shakespeare that looked hurt beyond any book physician's aid. Limp leather bindings that abused their prerogative; the box in which they were huddling together, slit and cracked and broken. How often hands had seized those coverings! They looked as if they had been the "vade mecum" of a book-lover for a score of years. And my Shakespeare at home is all crowded into one volume, so that "The Tempest" rages about the ears of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," and "Hamlet," with scant regard for royal rights, treads on the toes of poor "King Lear."

I opened one of the volumes and found to my surprise that the pages were immaculate.

154 I've Been Thinking

Not a word had been read! There were Shakespeare's wit and poetry and splendor and melody and humanity untouched by any save a cursory eye. I asked the maiden, who, temporarily divorced from the ribbon and lace counter, was giving her attention to the world of letters, what the set was worth.

"Five dollars" was the answer that fell on my hungry ears. And I had seen the same set advertised for fifteen! Twelve green-backed volumes there were, and they might be mine for five greenbacks. Never leaped sword from scabbard sooner than leaped my money from its pocket. I looked over my shoulder, fearing that some other book-lover would grab the box of books away from me and claim them. I examined them carefully as a mother does her boy when he comes crying into the house after a fall, and I found that they looked more hurt than they were. They were really more frightened than hurt. Incessant pawing by

I've Been Thinking 155

unfriendly hands is an awful ordeal to which to subject a book full of kindly instincts, as all of Shakespeare's books always are. But they had fallen on friendly hands at last, and hereafter they shall be handled with the respect due their contents.

And right here let me thank the kind people who treated Shakespeare so cavalierly. This may sound inconsistent; but are not my thanks due those who caused the bard to depreciate two-thirds in money value?

I can see them, typical shoppers, out for bargains in scrim and Hamburg edgings, making a hurried visit to the book counter in hope of getting a complete and unabridged set of Mary J. Holmes's works. And they stumbled on Shakespeare. Of course they had heard of him before. Cheap shoppers are not so ignorant as you imagine, lofty reader. They had often heard of him before, but they supposed that writing plays for Henry Irving to produce

156 I've Been Thinking

kept him too busy to do anything in the book line. Curious to see what sort of books he had written, they tumbled them out of the box and tested the limpness of the covers until those verdant leathers were hopelessly crippled and doomed to limp forever. They dropped them on the floor because the bindings were so curiously slippery — so unlike the bindings of Mary J. Then they picked them up by those same covers as one lifts a rabbit by its ears, and then they looked inside. The interior bore a striking resemblance to poetry, but there seemed to be a paucity of rhyme; and if it was conversation it was terribly broken up by abbreviated names. Back into the box they were hustled to await the coming of another shopper with peaked face, glittering eye, and hurried step, and hour by hour the value of that set of Shakespeare as leather and paper sank low and lower still, until one third of its worth was all that was left to it. In another

I've Been Thinking 157

week I might have had it for the asking, perhaps. But you shoppers, you did not hurt the thought in the book nor were the typography and the margins joggled awry by your contemptuous hands. I can sink back across the arms of my easiest chair and find as much of Shakespeare's divine essence as Cleon shall find in his hundred-dollar edition.

Therefore, I thank you, careless shoppers. When the glad season comes that reckless shoppers turn their thoughts to books, come out, ye bargainers, and depreciate a complete set of "The Tatler" for me. Only spare the integrity of the leaves. If you but let the leafage rival that of Vallombrosa I care not how you smut the covers, for there are detergents that shall kill all germs.

When I had secured my Shakespeare, I thought that there might peradventure be a set of Scott for a song. I saw an "Ivanhoe" here and a "Redgauntlet" there and a "Lady

158 I've Been Thinking

of the Lake" hard by, and I asked the maiden, late of the lace department, whether they had Scott's works complete. She walked up and down and cast a searching eye over the mass of books.

"No," said she, finally, with an omniscient smile, "there's nothing left but his poems and the Waverley Novels."

A crippled Shakespeare, with reasoning powers still intact, might seem to be enough of a bargain for one day, but at another table I found scores of essayists on dress parade and waiting to be transferred when it should suit the will of some random purchaser. They were massed in a solid phalanx, for they had been so unattractive to the rushing shoppers that they had scarce given them a toss. There was nothing limp about them. There they stood, undismayed, ready for friend or foe, pipeclayed and soldierly, with "shining morning faces." And nineteen cents would buy their discharge!

I've Been Thinking 159

What do you think, you thoughtless persons who spend a hundred dollars for a week at the Rangeley Lakes — what do you think of "A Week on the Concord" for nineteen cents? And while you can do no more than catch some fish that will fade in a few days I can catch and keep forever thoughts as quaint and as homely as Thoreau was himself.

O Cleon, you with your plethoric purse have never learned the delights of working for your money's worth. You spent two hundred dollars without the fun of picking and choosing, while I, for less than ten, have picked up a library of good fellows; and enjoyed the search withal.

The book-hurting shoppers did not toss and gore Balzac, for the very name seemed to them something "scientific," and they passed him by as if they had been so many Levites. Their unjust discrimination against him was my loss, for I still lack a Balzac. Next year it would

160 I've Been Thinking

pay you to dip into the Frenchman a little, ye scrim-hunting ladies. He is easily handled and although in the department-store edition his covers are not limp, you can bring down his price appreciably if you follow bargain-sale tactics. And when you have bewowed him and rejected him as worse than rubbish, will you kindly drop me a postal that I may go to see whether he has been let down to my stature?

But for one afternoon's browsing, credit me with Macaulay's "Literary Essays," Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus," Loti's "Iceland Fisherman," Emerson's "English Traits," Curtis's "Prue and I," Thoreau's "Walden" and his "Week on the Concord," and Shakespeare on crutches, and there is still some virtue in the ten dollars. Cleon, I wouldn't change places with you unless, together with your generous balance at the banker's, I could keep my ability to tire out a dollar.

DO you want to know why the maid left after the third hot night? I may be mistaken, but if you will take me up to the room she occupied I may be able to find a clue, and there is certainly nothing about me that resembles Sherlock Holmes.

What a large closet!

No? Not a closet? The maid's room?

Oh, la, la! (As they say in France.)

Do you remember the Black Hole of Calcutta?

Poor maid!

And what an apology for a window. And how hot the tin roof makes the room even this cool day.

Wasn't it awful the way some people treated slaves?

Makes me simply shudder to read the accounts.

So your maid stayed through the third hot night?

162 I've Been Thinking

Courageous girl!

I would have left after the first night's experience.

It was hot on your own floor with all the windows open and a direct draft over the bed.

But think of that room.

"Elizabeth or the Exiles of Siberia!"

Only they were cold.

And both you and your husband pillars of the church.

You might install an electric fan.

That would help.

Three nights in a hot-box!

Pfew!



Handwritten mark: a large, stylized 'H' or 'A' with a flourish.

WHEN a man's label is on he has no idea what people really think of him. I know of a pianist in New York who has a label that's worth a good deal to him. Why, with his label on he can make at least twenty-

I've Been Thinking 163

five thousand dollars a year, and socially he is a lion — with his label on, mind you.

He is such a compeller of tone that he can make women weep — when they know who he is — and Paderewski himself is said to have said that there is no one he would rather hear play than this same bald head — for he happens to be that *rara avis*, a bald-headed pianist.

Zabritski, who was born within a stone's throw of the New York Academy of Music, of New England parents, is the soul of good-nature, and, except when he is on a concert tour, he hasn't a particle of big head. He once told me that when he is on a concert tour he finds that a certain amount of big-headedness is expected of him by his audiences in order to convince them that he is the real goods, and so sometimes he refuses to play on a piano after he has sat down to it and makes the audience wait until a better one is brought up from the local warerooms.

164 I've Been Thinking

Of course the papers next day call him a crank, but they admit that he is a man of tenacity of purpose, and that is a beloved American trait, so he scores a hit whenever he is cranky that way. But the crankiness is all assumed and he often laughs about it among his friends and says, for the matter of that, one piano is as bad as another when one is playing off the main line.

All this is when he has his label on. Now I'll tell you about something that happened when his label was off and he was just an ordinary person.

There was a struggling basso by the name of Brown, who was desirous of effecting an entrance into society to the extent of being engaged to sing at swagger and noisy receptions of the élite — the kind who pronounce it "elight" — and one day he came to Zabritski, whom he had known for years, with a woful tale about his fear of losing an engagement to

I've Been Thinking 165

sing at the house of a rich lard lady on account of his accompanist having sprained his wrist, and would Zabritski go incog and play for him?

And of course Zabritski would, just as willingly as he would have done it when he had some hair and was struggling himself, and so little basso Brown departed in fine spirits.

Now it happened that the great Zabritski arrived first at the home of the rich lard lady — who was a newly richer, by the way — and he gave her to understand that he was only a poor worm of an accompanist, and at that her manner, which had been non-committal, changed to frigidity and she sent him haughtily into an ante-room off the main hall to await the arrival of Brown. Zabritski's sense of humor is often his salvation, and he who is used to being It in the center of a drawing-room, with ladies falling all over one another in their efforts to shake the hand that was taught by Liszt, went

166 I've Been Thinking

meekly into the anteroom and shivered in a draft while he waited.

After a time the newly rich lard lady left her chattering guests and came in and spoke to him; in fact she scolded him rather hard because the basso was late, and Zabritski, with a beautiful assumption of servility, said: "I'm very sorry, madam, but this is the time for us poor artists to make hay, and my friend, Monsieur Brown, is singing at a reception at the Countess Sagoni's. He sings but one number and will be here soon. I hope you will excuse me for taking up room here until he comes."

Now all this was innocent fiction, for the little basso was not singing at the Countess Sagoni's, although he would have loved to. He was merely behind time.

But the lard lady pricked up her ears at mention of the Countess's name, as she belonged to a real aristocracy, centuries old, which ripened on the shores of the Adriatic, and the

I've Been Thinking 167

newly richer would have given her tiara to be one of the favored few who attended her really musical musicales.

Her tone toward Zabritski softened, and she told him that he could come in and sit down behind the grand piano if he found it too cold in the anteroom. Zabritski had never sat behind a grand piano in his life, and as he is fond of new sensations he accepted her invitation and hid himself from the chattering throng, and at last Brown came in and sang to Zabritski's accompaniment, and several times his voice could be heard above the conversation, although there were nearly a hundred talking and he was the only one singing.

After the music was all finished the little basso and his humble friend, Zabritski, went away without a word from the lard lady, because she was talking a blue streak to an aristocrat from above Fifty-ninth Street, who was as freshly aristocratic as a newly minted coin,

168 I've Been Thinking

and for the same reason — she belonged to the coinage of 1903.

But the butler gave Brown twenty-five dollars in three bills as he went out, and so he was happy — for he needed the money.

Time works miracles, and some time later the lard lady gave an evening concert, and having by rare good luck met the Countess Sagoni, she invited her, and the Countess Sagoni, having a fondness for freaks, accepted the invitation. One must relax sometimes.

The rich lard lady had a number of singers who waited in the anteroom, but her *pièce de résistance* was no less a lion than that great Hungarian pianist (born in Irving place), Ignace Zabritski. She had engaged him through Herr Wolfram Waldvogel, and I happen to know that he was to receive five hundred dollars for playing once.

Now if she had had a memory for faces she would have recognized him as soon as he came

I've Been Thinking 169

in — and yet I don't know. You see Herr Waldvogel, who is a real German gentleman, blond, six feet tall, and with the manners of an Austrian noble, came with Zabritski, and he presented him to the lard lady with tremendous impressiveness, and Zabritski put on his most exclusive air and seemed about to die of ennui on the spot, and that fetched the lard lady all right (if you will pardon such a free use of English).

But the thing that settled it was when the Countess Sagoni went up to Zabritski, whom she knew very well, and chatted most bohemianly with him in very choice Italian. After that every one in the room was hauled up and presented to him, and then he sat down and played a pathetic thing by Tschaikowsky, and many people who knew it was pathetic were moved to tears — right in the midst of their conversation — and after it was all over the lard lady shook hands with Zabritski most

170 I've Been Thinking

effusively and asked him if he knew any other artists of "dear old Hungary" who could do a turn. She also said she adored "talent." And Zabritski remembered his sense of humor just in time and told her he had a compatriot named Braunski, who had a glorious bass voice, and he thought he could get him to sing for two hundred dollars as a great favor, although he was simply visiting this country and was doing nothing of a professional kind.

Of course you know that when the little basso came to the house he had his label on (the wrong label, naturally, as Brown, or Braunski, the basso, was born near Gowanus Canal, over in Brooklyn).

But the lard lady made much of him, you can bet your sesterces, and the Countess Sagoni, who knew a good voice when she heard it, no matter where a man had happened to be born, had him sing at one of her Sundays, and that

I've Been Thinking 171

was the beginning of his present successful career.

Oh, these labels!



THE first pair of shoes. A very important addition to the wardrobe of life in spite of their insignificant size. The shoes that come afterward are thrown aside or given away or are worn all to pieces and are less provocative of sentiment than two weather-beaten shoes that have served their turn to boy or man. But the first shoes are often kept by the mother of the little one who put them on, sometimes to show them to him when he is big enough to appreciate that at one time his feet were as diminutive; sometimes to awaken memories of little feet that finished their earthly pilgrimage too sorrowfully soon.

But it is not to the mother alone that the first pair of shoes is important. At the time

172 I've Been Thinking

of their acquisition they are omnipresent to the consciousness of their baby owner.

The first pair of trousers fill not so wide a place in the mental horizon. By the time one arrives at his first trousers he has tasted of a good many felicities and can compare one thing with another. He may have known and remembered disappointments and life is not with him an entirely roseate dream; he has had fights with the neighbor's boy and perhaps did not always come off victorious, and while the trousers are, of course, fore tastes of heaven, still his eyes have been opened to some of the disillusionments of early boyhood.

But the first pair of shoes — perhaps I should say the first consciousness of a pair of shoes — comes when the owner is not yet three and brings with it absolute and undiluted felicity.

From time to time mother goes away from the house and when Toddlekins asks where

I've Been Thinking 173

she is the reply is, "Mama has gone to town. She'll come back soon."

He runs to the window and climbs up on a chair and looks toward the point where the hill drops suddenly and there is nothing to be seen but clouds and blue sky. Toddlekens knows that somewhere below the blue sky mama is riding after old Jack to "Tottiton." "Tottiton" is as near as Toddlekens can come to pronouncing the name of the village to which mother has gone to do her Saturday shopping, but Tottiton is as near to the name as is necessary. All children have their Tottitons, places of delight from which mamas come back bearing wonderful packages that may contain nothing but things for the kitchen, but that once in a while hold red and white candies called "pepnit."

So Toddlekens looks out of the window for mama until he is tired, and then he lies down on the sitting-room floor and goes into a dream-

174 I've Been Thinking

less sleep from which the rattle of wheels awakens him, and he runs to the front window and there is mama with her basket full of bundles.

"What for Toddy, mama? What for Toddy?"

"Oh, I've brought some tea and some oatmeal and some onions. Want them?"

He is reaching up inquisitive hands to poke a hole in a package in order to find out whether it is only tea and oatmeal or whether it is beloved "pepnits."

"Don't touch, Toddlekins. Come out into the kitchen and if you're a good boy mama will give you something very nice."

"Pepnits, mama?"

"Better than pepnits," says mama, who has two older children and who knows what is better than pepnits.

Out into the kitchen trots Toddlekins, wondering what there is on this great earth

I've Been Thinking 175

that stretches 'way down to Tottiton better than pepnits.

The prosaic oatmeal and tea and onions and many other packages are laid upon the kitchen table, and but one package remains in the basket, and it does not look to Toddlekins like pepnits. The color of the paper is different.

It is summer time and Toddlekins has been going barefoot ever since he can remember — ever since April in fact. Before that he wore little home-made shoes, but he does not remember those.

All too slowly mama removes the string and opens the paper, and there are two shoes like sister Alice's only smaller.

"Shoes for you, Toddikins."

Flop on the floor he goes as if he had slipped on ice; and tries to put the shoes on backward, upside down, any way but the right way.

"Here, dear, mama will put them on."

"Dey has buttons, mama," says Toddle-

176 I've Been Thinking

kins, his eyes winking with excitement. He struggles to get up and walk in them before the shoes are fairly on, let alone being buttoned.

Stockings? Not to-day. Mama knows his impatience. This is just for delight, and if he had not another stitch on him he would be fully clothed and willing to go anywhere with anybody. His shoes have made him fearless and reckless.

"Sit still, Toddles. I can't put them on with you wiggling."

"Want to stand up and show Alice."

Of course he does. If the world were to him as big as it really is he would march around its entire circumference on a journey just to tell every one in it the all-important, the tremendous fact that he, Toddlekins Maffews, has a pair of new shoes.

At last he is up and the shoes are accomplished facts. Two shiny black encasements that are far brighter than the sun or anything

I've Been Thinking 177

he has ever seen. Why, he can see nothing else. He is all new shoes.

Alice comes into the kitchen.

"I dot new shoes, Alice," says Toddlekens.

"Oh, doesn't he look cunning, mama. You dear baby."

"I'm not a baby. I'm big boy, mos' as big as Arfur."

A noise is heard outside and Arthur comes in. Perhaps Toddlekens exaggerated a little, for Arthur is ten and well grown for his age, and Toddlekens is not yet three.

"See my new shoes, Arfur."

"Kid," says Arthur, contemptuously, meaning no pun.

"Don't laugh at him, Arthur," says his mother. "He's a very big boy and he has a beautiful pair of shoes."

Indeed they are beautiful. Pepnits are totally forgotten in the joy of this gift. He marches around the kitchen in them and then he jumps

178 I've Been Thinking

around it in them and then he hops around. They make a very grown-up sound. The affectionate little fellow suddenly realizes that "muvver" brought them, and he runs to embrace her, trips over the shoes, and falls on his face.

His lips begin to pucker. One word of sympathy from mama or Alice and the flood gates would open. But the word does not come. Mama knows better. He is now a "big boy" and she says, "Big boys with new shoes don't cry, do they?"

He jumps up and in prodigious tones he says, "No, big boys don't cry. I show grammer my shoes." And then he climbs up-stairs, patting each step with what is to him a rafter-shaking tread and quite sure that he will frighten grandma half to death. He calls to her before he reaches her door:

"Grammer, it's Tot'kins."

"My mercy me!" says grandma from

I've Been Thinking 179

within her pleasant room. "I thought it was bears and robbers."

How proud he feels. For of course he believes her. Those new shoes coming up the stairs did sound kind of like bears and robbers. He bursts into a merry laugh.

"New shoes, grammer. I'm big boy now."

"Well, I never did in all my born days," says grandma, looking over her spectacles at them.

"Are those real buttons on them, Totsy?"

"Umh, umh. Muvver brought 'em from Tottiton. An' I'm to have stockings."

"Well, I should hope so. Shoes without stockings would be only half dressed. Still the shoes are the main thing, aren't they?"

"Mmm."

"Where you going, Totsy." For he has turned and is marching out with what is pretty near to a military stride, his eyes on the shiny black shoes that make walking so easy. It wouldn't be very hard to fly with such shoes on.

180 I've Been Thinking

"Totsy, where are you going?"

"Show my shoes to ve minister."

Mr. Hardin is the nearest neighbor of the Matthews and he lives about a quarter of a mile away.

"Oh, I wouldn't go out doors with my new shoes. Keep them fresh for Sunday."

Toddlekins says nothing. Young as he is he has learned that when one says nothing but goes and does something, at any rate it is done even though there be consequences. Now Rev. Mr. Hardin is one of the nicest men in the world, and it is no more than right that Toddlekins should let him know what honors have been showered upon his feet. Of course he must go and show the new shoes to the nice man. "Muvver" would want him to go. But it won't be necessary to bother her by asking. He'll tell her when he comes back.

Hello, there are drawbacks to everything. One can steal out of the house in one's bare

I've Been Thinking 181

feet and go on forbidden walks without attracting any attention, but these beautiful, shiny, black new shoes are saying with every step, "We're running away."

He tries tiptoes, but at the most critical juncture he stumbles over himself as he did in the kitchen, and falls. But he does not cry and he is up in an instant and goes down the front stairs because there is a carpet there. Really, new shoes have a powerfully stimulating effect on the brain. Toddlekins is doing a vast amount of thinking for a three-year-old. I tell you that when one has his first shoes on his feet it gives him a new understanding.

He finally escapes without being observed and trudges away through the dusty road to the minister's house. The black shoes are not as black now and he stops to wipe them off on his little white sleeve. Ah, that is better—for the shoes.

182 I've Been Thinking

Forward again with his eyes on the magnetic shoes, and if Joel Holton were not a careful driver he would have been run over, for the baby never saw the horse approaching for absorption in his shoes.

He hears the hail of welcome from good-natured and fat Joel and he says, "I got new shoes," and in his efforts to show both at once he sits down hard. But a hard sit-down is a very ordinary way of reaching earth to a three-year-old. He is up and on and arrives at the parsonage just exactly in time to set flight to a very valuable train of thought in the mind of the good minister who is hard at work at his sermon.

"Mr. Hardin! Mr. Hardin!" shouts Toddlekins outside his study door.

"Hello, what you want?" says the minister, with just a shade of irritation in his voice. His own children are never allowed to disturb him.

I've Been Thinking 183

"I have new shoes," said Toddlekins, still outside the door.

The boy tries in vain to turn the knob and the minister opens the door for him, his brow wrinkled at the interruption. But when he sees Toddlekins and the new shoes his mind is carried to a far distant day when there was another baby who stood before him and who showed him shoes, and his eyes dim and his tones grow soft as he stoops down and pats the little tow head and says:

"You don't mean to tell me that you have new shoes?"

The boy nods his head eloquently, his breast heaving with excitement. He has astonished the minister.

"Well, seems to me those are very fine shoes. And how black they are."

The boy stoops down and polishes them again with his sleeve. His sleeves are no longer white.

"I came froo de road," he explains.

184 I've Been Thinking

"And all alone. What a big boy! Well, you go out and ask Martha for a doughnut and then go back to mother. And be sure to come to-morrow to church with those nice black shoes and listen to my church talk that I am writing now. Do you remember when you said you wondered why they let me talk in church when they wouldn't let you?"

"That was when I was a little boy."

"Exactly, nearly a month ago, before you had new shoes. Well, they certainly are fine. You be sure to show them to Martha and be sure to get the doughnut."

Be sure to show the shoes to Martha, indeed. Toddlekins might forget the doughnut, but nothing could put the shoes out of his thoughts. It will be a very sleepy and tired boy who goes to bed that night (with his shoes still on — by special permission) and those same little black shoes with the shiny buttons will have carried him over many a mile indoors and out, but

I've Been Thinking 185

though he live to be a hundred he will never again come on a day so full of triumphs and happinesses.



THE Reader of Novels was wont to judge of a man's character by a few sharply defined actions set forth by the novelist, and the woman who scolded her children in the first, fifth, and seventh chapters was, of course, a vixen. So also the man who spoke ungrammatically each time he made his appearance in the book was a man of low social position, and the fellow who refused to make Christmas presents was an incurably mean man.

Having become used to these snap judgments of his fellows by a constant reading of novels, the Reader flattered himself that he could judge of a man's character by the first thing he said or by the first thing that was said of him by his neighbor.

186 I've Been Thinking

And it so happened that the Reader of Novels found himself in a strange place that did not seem to be on this earth at all, and a man with a noble brow and a weak chin and a strong mouth and near-set and lustrous eyes and a large nose and generous ears and large feet and small hands and a bull neck stood near by, and one who looked like a judge was talking about him and naming his characteristics.

"He was often cross to his wife," said the judge.

"Ah, a male scold," said the Reader of Novels, readily.

"He was very fond of children."

"What's that?" said the Reader of Novels, scenting something incongruous.

"One time his heart was set to murder his brother and only his brother's flight prevented his death."

"A thug," said the Reader of Novels, always to himself.

I've Been Thinking 187

"He denied himself all that makes life worth living in order to make the last days of his mother comfortable, and moved by a good impulse he divided the estate with his brother although it had all been left to him."

"The same man?" said the Reader of Novels, dumbfounded.

"He did a despicably mean act in business and was never sorry for it."

"Ah, I thought so," said the Reader of Novels. "His true character is coming out."

"He told a vulgar story to a friend and both laughed at the undoubted humor of it."

"Ah, ha!" said the Reader of Novels. "He is being drawn a little truer to life."

"He was deeply moved by a spiritual poem and appreciated it so sincerely that he wrote it out and carried it with him, and finally learned it by heart and tried to govern his life according to its precepts."

188 I've Been Thinking

"The deuce he did!" said the Reader of Novels, incredulously.

"He told another vulgar story."

"He'd better have given up shamming," said the Reader of Novels.

"He drank more than was good for him and was seen in a condition of inebriety by young people who had respected him as a governor of the church."

"Of course," said the Reader of Novels. "He is getting truer and truer to his character."

"He established a club to which young men were welcome and at which no intoxicating liquors were sold, and said in all sincerity that he believed immoderate drinking to be a curse."

"The hypocrite," said the Reader of Novels.

"He voted the Republican ticket."

"Good," said the Reader of Novels, who was a Vermonter.

I've Been Thinking 189

"He voted the Democratic ticket."

"Turncoat," said the Reader of Novels.

"He gave generously of his means to help a poor man who had been buffeted by the world, and spoke well of him when to do so exposed him to contumely."

"Who was this, anyhow?" said the Reader of Novels, more and more puzzled.

"He said malignant things behind a man's back, things that worked the man's downfall, although he never knew that."

"Pity he didn't. He would have exulted," said the Reader of Novels.

"He reproached a man in all sincerity for saying like things of another behind his back, and had a poor opinion of that backbiter from that time on."

"This is beyond me," said the Reader of Novels.

"He refused night after night to give up his seat in the cars to poor tired women, and at

190 I've Been Thinking

last gave his life to save a poor wretched Magdalen from death by fire."

At this point the Reader of Novels addressed the judge, and said.

"What was this person, anyway?"

"He was a human being," said the judge, gravely. "There are many such."



"SEVEN Miles to Smith's Shoe Store." So reads the half obliterated legend upon the mile-post opposite my door in the country. It is ten years since in proud fresh paint it first invited my gaze, and what a comforter and guide and warning it has been in that time! Smith's shoe store is in a provincial town. Smith's shoe store is presumably dark and dismal and smells of leather and new rubber overshoes and patent insoles, and it probably backs upon a dirty, turgid stream that supplies some half dozen mills that

I've Been Thinking 191

might better go thirsty than taste of its oily waters.

Often when things have gone wrong with me, the clouds seeming to have neither end nor beginning, I have looked out at the little sign and have realized that whatever else might happen I was still seven miles away from Smith's shoe store.

The mile-post stands amid a clump of brakes; black alders shield it from the morning sun, and a sweetbrier bush has scratched at its paint for seven summers; in the distance one sees purple mountains and near at hand are fragrant meadows and inviting woods and an irresolute brook and half ruined stone walls on whose mossy rocks the robins sing in the morning, and I have seen many a humorous bobolink pause and seem to read the sign and then fly away from Smith's shoe store, singing mockingly.

Smith's shoe store will always be a sealed

192 I've Been Thinking

book to me, thanks to the sign. I have received a friendly warning and I know where not to go. My feet may need shoes from time to time, but they will never come from Smith's emporium. I want to feel that the worst has not happened for me; that Smith's is still a *terra incognita*.

Once I went driving aimlessly and turning a corner I came on a sister mile-post that read "One Mile to Smith's Shoe Store." The road was narrow and it was risky turning, but almost in a panic I pointed my horse's nose in the way it should go and drove back at a rattling pace — any pace is a rattling one with me for I need a new wagon. How cheering it was when I had ridden some thirty minutes to come to another mile-post that read "Two Miles to Smith's Shoe Store"! And as I passed each one in turn I felt like breaking out into a song of thanksgiving, for the road led me higher and higher and new glories of scenery were dis-

I've Been Thinking 193

covered as Smith's fell back farther and farther, and at last I came to my silent comforter and was assured in characters still legible that it was "Seven Miles to Smith's." Never again did I take that particular drive.

There are Smith's shoe stores scattered throughout our lives. Happy we, if it is possible to keep the seven-mile guide-post in front of our eyes and feel that whatever other evils may befall, two good leagues of road lie between us and Smith's.



PROFESSOR ERASMUS SVELTHETT of St. Jacob's University has written a very learned brochure in which he sets forth an interesting theory; namely, that the reason that children of to-day are so much more quiet at the breakfast-table than boys and girls used to be is because they have plenty to read, while the children of bygone generations, with nothing

194 I've Been Thinking

to do save eat, had perforce to join in the conversation or become *ennuyés*.

There is certainly much to be said in favor of this theory. Children of the present time never obtain the balance of conversation, nor do they ever have to be reprimanded for interrupting or for saying untoward things at the wrong moment — although it is a question whether the right moment for untoward things ever comes.

But even if this fascinating breakfast-literature did not keep the children quiet there would be no question of its stimulative action upon their minds.

We who look back over the lapse of years to our own childhood recall that there were no Maltuminparvo breakfast-foods with copious directions for use, and chatty paragraphs printed in various-sized type on the yellow box. To be sure, those of us who lived too far away from great centers to be able to buy our con-

I've Been Thinking 195

densed milk fresh every day from the itinerant white wagon were accustomed to the circular cans with their Gail-burdened literature in various languages, but in those days Gail Hamilton reigned supreme even in the nursery, and her epigrammatic writings spoiled us for the more labored effusions of the other Gail. Then, too, the cans being circular, mother had to keep turning them around if little Willy wanted to read, and this was almost as bad as being interrupted.

But now all is changed. If papa is taciturn; if mama has a headache and does not care to talk, little William, who has long since learned how to read, sits at the matutinal repast and quietly imbibes useful information of many kinds. All silently the knowledge is borne in on him that "Energyscose is the fuel-food of life. Better a pewter plate and Energyscose than a golden platter and nought but a stalled ox thereon."

196 I've Been Thinking

If he tire of reading about the virtues of Energyscose he may turn his eyes to the corn-tassel colored box on the right and learn that "Gripe-knots are unlike any other food preparation. Being entirely digested they naturally wean a strong man from coffee, and can be eaten without practise by teething babies. They contain nothing that will give the stomach the slightest trouble, and persons who have used our food for years do not need their stomachs at all. They are made of devitalized chestnut sawdust, and it is possible to eat them without the use of sugar or cream" — or anesthetics. "Properly compressed they can be used by the children as building-blocks, and can then be reduced to a powder and taken once every two hours, when they give one all the effect of having eaten without its foolish pleasures."

When William has read, and one side is thoroughly digested — for the literature is not predigested, like the contents of the box —

I've Been Thinking 197

mama will turn it around, and he may read inspiring letters from invalids who lost their sense of taste years ago and who have enjoyed Gripe-knots ever since; or else on the third side he may learn how to make simple, innocuous desserts of bran.

Really literary families seldom content themselves with one lettered box of patent food, and some cultivated Bostonians have as many as five or six brands, of various shades of yellow and brown, merely that Alcibiades Beacon, tired of reading about Cornena and its stimulative properties, may turn to the box of Wheat-oast or Puttyjim's Oathusk, or the box of Noegud with its entertaining anecdote to the effect that "a lady in Seattle, who had not been able to take a step for fourteen years, ate a single box of Noegud and immediately took steps to keep it constantly in the larder" — and away from the breakfast-table. Or his little mind, unable to cope with his father's argu-

198 I've Been Thinking

ments to prove Aguinaldo a bigger man than Washington, turns with relief to the statement that "Mrs. Bentley, of Shogticocoa, Minnesota, was unable to take anything solid without facial paralysis. She ate one box of Noegud and now says that she would rather eat solid rock than be without it." Mark the subtle sarcasm of her remark. It is dollars to doughnuts that Alcibiades, Bostonian though he be, does not see that if she would not be without it she would not have it within her.

Some may carp at the colors of the packages; some may even wish that the food could be put in china receptacles and the literature set beside each plate in "individual" pamphlets, but no one can say that there are not many aids to conversation among the elders and much of an improving nature to children in the unobtrusive and absolutely veracious writings of the food-companies.

ARE you in the habit of sending your husband to dry-goods stores to match things?

If you live in the country or the suburbs and your husband's office is in the city there is some excuse for it, but if you live in the city and make the poor man do such work as that you ought to have married some one else.

His brain is not your brain. To him shades and textures and shapes are as nothing.

Either he will be conscientious and get the girl at the counter to try to make the exact match, and failing in that will come home without the spools upon which you are depending for your morning's work, or else being careless he will get something that could not by any possibility be made to do.

In either case you will judge him from a woman's view point and he will make but a sorry showing.

200 I've Been Thinking

The best way is to write down plainly just what you want him to get and reduce him to mere ignorant errand-boy status.

Then he, a man who perhaps dominates political assemblies or sits high in church councils or delivers valuable legal opinions, shuffles into the store, meek-eyed and diffident, and going up to the spool counter (after wandering all over the store looking for it) says, "Give me some of that," and pointing at the paper shoves it at the young saleswoman. And she looks at him with pitying eyes as a poor fool and, reading the directions, hands out the goods.

He goes home with them and ten to one they are wrong, but he is safe.

His wife can say nothing because he was merely the shover of a message, not a thinking being with two halves to his brain.

But the best way to do is to go yourself and thus save your husband from encounters that

I've Been Thinking 201

cannot fail to reduce his exalted opinion of himself.



SOME wedded couples never quarrel at all! I have heard people who had lived together for eighty or ninety or a hundred years say:—

“We have never let a hard word pass between us,” and I have thought it must have seemed like a hundred and fifty years.

Some couples never quarrel in public and they are supposed to get along beautifully and are noted among their neighbors as being devoted. I haven't a doubt that they are devoted. But if they are devoted I haven't a doubt but that they have their healthy little tiffs every now and then.

Now it seems to me that in a suburban community where gossip is kindly and there is “nothing doing,” it would be a good thing if married couples would quarrel in public every

I've Been Thinking

now and then. That is supposing they quarrel picturesquely. I know people so dull that even a quarrel in their hands would not attract the attention of a bystander.

But if a fairly young husband and wife have the gift of stinging repartee and they feel that they have been on good terms too long it would be a boon to their neighbors if they would call them up by telephone and say, "Come around at once. Jenny and I are boiling over."

Depend upon it, all who called themselves friends would come instanter and would take up comfortable situations where they could hear the verbal set-to without difficulty.

Then let Jenny say something she will regret and let Jack follow it up with a caustic retort and the fun would have begun.

In such a case as this, if Jack is afraid of going too far he can have a trusted friend call time on him, or if he fears that the vituperative powers of Jenny are likely to lead her far afield

I've Been Thinking 203

he can have the same friend call time on her; but do let the battle go on until every one feels mentally stimulated.

And when the last guest has gone Jenny can fall weeping on Jack's neck and say she never meant a word of it.

The only trouble is that she did mean it.

That's what cuts.



THE other day you said you wished little Ethel was grown up; that you were tired of the anxieties that come to the mother of a three-year-old.

My goodness, woman, you know not what you wish.

There was a mother had a little boy of three, a tiny, prattling, affectionate, tiring child, and many times she said, "Oh, if he could only grow up in a minute. There is so much to do for him and I may not do it right, and there is

204 I've Been Thinking

no telling what sickness may come to him. I wish he was eighteen."

As she spoke she heard the flutter of wings and a presence seemed to leave the room, and the boy who had been playing out of doors, trying to guide a big hoe with his baby hands, came running into the house. And his step was heavy.

She looked up and saw an awkward, homely, cocksure boy in place of the rosy, loquacious, loving child.

"Who are you?" said she, seeing in him a likeness to his father, yet not knowing her own son.

"I am your boy. I have skipped all the years of childhood. I have left unsaid the wise little sayings that would have comforted you. I have left undone the things that you would have held in remembrance. I have given up my early, trusting love for you, for now I am almost a man and I do not need love."

I've Been Thinking 205

And the mother cried out in horror for she did not wish to believe that this hobbledehoy was her little boy.

And, sobbing, she leaned her head on the table, and in a few moments she woke up and saw her little boy coming in at the door lugging the muddy hoe behind him.

And she hugged him to her, hoe and all, and said, "Live your life with me and grow from babyhood to boyhood, for I want to live it all with you."



OF course an afternoon tea is not to be taken seriously, and I hold that any kind of conversation goes, as long as it is properly vacuous and irrelevant.

One meets many kinds at afternoon teas — the bored, the bashful, the intense, and once in a while the interesting, but for pure delight there is nothing quite equals the gusher. She

206 I've Been Thinking

is generally very pretty. Nature insists upon compensations.

When you meet a real gusher — one born to gush — you can just throw all bounds of probability aside and say the first thing that comes into your head, sure that it will meet with an appreciative burst of enthusiasm, for your true gusher is nothing if she is not enthusiastic. There are those who listen to everything you say and punctuate it with "Yes-s-s, yes-s-s, yes-s-s," until the sibilance gets on your nerves; but the attention of the Simon-pure gusher is purely subconscious. She could not repeat a thing of what you have told her a half minute after hearing it. Her real attention is on something else all the while — perhaps on the gowns of her neighbors, perhaps on the reflection of her pretty face — but never on the conversation. And why should it be? Is a tea a place for the exercise of concentration? Perish the thought.

I've Been Thinking 207

You are presented to her as "Mr. Mmmm," and she is "delighted," and smiles so ravishingly that you wish you were twenty years younger. You do not yet know that she is a gusher. But her first remark labels her. Just to test her, for there is something in the animation of her face and the farawayness of the eye that makes you suspect her sincerity, you say: —

"I happen to have six children —"

"Oh, how perfectly dee-ar! How old are they?"

She scans the gown of a woman who has just entered the room and, being quite sure that she is engaged in a mental valuation of it, you say: —

"They're all of them six."

"Oh, how lovely!" Her unseeing eyes look you in the face. "Just the right age to be companions."

"Yes, all but one."

208 I've Been Thinking

The eye has wandered to another gown, but the sympathetic voice says: —

“Oh, what a pi-i-ty!”

“Yes, isn't it? But he's quite healthy.”

It's a game now — fair game — and you're glad you came to the tea!

“Healthy, you say? How nice. It's perfectly lovely to be healthy. Do you live in the country?”

“Not exactly the country. We live in Madison Square, under the trees.”

“Oh, how perfectly idyllic!”

“Yes; we have all the advantages of the city and the delights of the country. I got a permit from the Board of Education to put up a little bungalow alongside the Worth monument, and the children bathe in the fountain every morning when the weather is cold enough.”

“Oh, how charming! How many children have you?”

I've Been Thinking 209

"Only seven. The oldest is five and the youngest is six."

"Just the interesting age. Don't you think children fascinating?"

Again the roaming eye and the vivacious smile.

"Yes, indeed. My oldest — he's fourteen and quite original. He says that when he grows up he doesn't know what he'll be."

"Really? How cute!"

"Yes, he says it every morning, a half hour before breakfast."

"Fancy! How old did you say he was?"

"Just seventeen, but perfectly girlike and masculine."

She nods her head, bows to an acquaintance in a distant part of the room, and murmurs in musical, sympathetic tones: —

"That's an adorable age."

"What, thirteen?"

"Yes. Did you say it was a girl?"

210 I've Been Thinking

"Yes, his name's Ethel. He's a great help to her mother."

"Little darling."

"Yes; I tell them there may be city advantages, but I think they're much better off where they are."

"Where did you say you were?"

"On the Connecticut shore. You see, having only the one child, Mrs. Smith is very anxious that it should grow up healthy" (absent-minded nods indicative of full attention), "and so little Ronald never comes to the city at all. He plays with the fisherman's child and gets great drafts of fresh air."

"Oh, how perfectly entrancing! You're quite a poet."

"No; I'm a painter."

Now she is really attentive. She thought you were just an ordinary beast, and she finds that you may be a lion. Smith? Perhaps you're Hopkinson Smith.

I've Been Thinking 211

"Oh, do you paint? How perfectly adorable! What do you paint — landscapes or portraits?"

Again the eye wanders and she inventories a dress, and you say: —

"Oils."

"Do you ever allow visitors to come to your studio?"

"Why, I never prevent them, but I'm so afraid it will bore them that I never ask them."

"Oh, how could anybody be bored at anything?"

"But every one hasn't your enthusiasm. My studio is in the top of the Madison Square tower, and I never see a soul from week's end to week's end."

"Oh, then you're not married."

"Dear, no: a man who is wedded to his art mustn't commit bigamy."

"Oh, how clever. So you're a bachelor?"

"Yes, but I have my wife for a chaperon,